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MÖRĀN 'ETHŌ

26

SHIRIN CHRISTIAN QUEEN: MYTH OF LOVE

by
DDR. WILHELM BAUM



ST. EPHREM ECUMENICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SEERI)
BAKER HILL, KOTTAYAM - 686 001
INDIA

2005

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St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute (SEERI)
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Portrait of Shirin

Preface

This book is the first biography of a Christian queen in the Orient. Shirin, a Christian Syrian, was a member of the “Apostolic Church of the East”. She lived in what is today known as Iraq. At the end of the 6th century, she married the Persian king Chosrau II, and by doing so, gained considerable influence on political matters in the borderland of Byzantium and Iran. It attracts attention that she does not really play an important role in modern books on the history of the Persians. In the course of the collapse of the Persian Empire only a few decades after Shirin’s death, almost the entire Persian literature was destroyed. Therefore, we have to rely on Byzantine and Syrian sources. Only that the Syrian literature of the 7th century got lost to a considerable extent as well. However, the queen has also been mentioned in Armenian and Arabic sources as well as in Persian literature after the 10th century. Over time, colourful drawings were added to the epics. Finally, the reports were illustrated in the form of miniature paintings in addition to the epics Firdausis, Nizamis and other poets. It had never been the case before that a woman coming from the Christian minority of Persia actually had great power in politics - and this while being by the side of a man who had a huge harem. Poets and story-tellers liked this theme very much and varied it in many respects in order to tell the story of their love. The theme got from Persia to Turkey and all the way to Central Asia and India where it inspired poets and painters up to the 19th century.

Shirin is actually material for a novel. This book, however, aims at portraying the historic archetype by taking a look at a great number of fragments and over-subscriptions. At the same time, the book is meant to describe the way from reception into the public tradition.

I am especially delighted about the book being published in India in Kottayam, the centre of the Thomas Christians in Kerala. I would like to thank Rev. Dr. Jacob Thekeparampil for letting this book become part of the “Moran Etho” series.

Klagenfurt,
May 2005

Wilhelm Baum

SHIRIN

CHRISTIAN QUEEN: MYTH OF LOVE

A popular motif among Persian miniaturists was that of a naked woman bathing in a spring while being watched by a man. The characters portrayed here are the Christian queen Shirin and her lover and husband, the Persian shah Chosroes. Another popular motif within the "Chosroes and Shirin" epos was that of Shirin contemplating a portrait of Chosroes and falling in love with it. In later years their relationship is said to have developed gradually into a love triangle: the craftsman Ferhard also falls in love with Shirin, and she orders him to dig a canal through a mountain to her court. The miniaturists, as well as the poet Nizami (+1209) and Arab cosmographers, incorporated a Late Persian stone relief near the town of Kermanschah into the epos. The relief shows a rider on a horse and above him the shah and the god who inducted him. The woman depicted next to them is a Zoroastrian goddess and not Shirin, as proponents in the Muslim era would have it believed. This extraordinary rock relief was therefore responsible for the continued embellishment of the saga, which was widely assimilated into Persian and Turkish literature. In the twelfth century the love story was populated with

archetypal figures. Muslim poetry largely suppressed its Christian background; Shirin, a member of the Syriac Church of the East, became the "Armenian." This epic tale of love spread from Iran not only to Turkey, India and Usbekistan; it was also assimilated into the Christian country of Georgia. No attempt has been made so far in understanding the historical background of this myth.

This book endeavours to analyze first of all the historical roots of the Shirin saga. It is necessary, however, to start with a brief introduction to the history of Iran and to illuminate the differences between the orthodox Byzantine Church within the Eastern Roman Empire and the "Apostolic Church of the East", the so-called "Nestorians". The often contradictory sources which state that Chosroes II. (+628) was also married to Mary, daughter of the Byzantine emperor Maurice, led to the development of a story about rivalry culminating in Mary's poisoning of Shirin. An investigation into the veracity of Byzantine, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian and Arabic sources is therefore needed.

It becomes evident that later sources, like Firdausi's "Shah Namah," the Persian national epos composed around 1000 C.E., do not present an accurate account of historical events. It may not be a coincidence that, as yet, no biography of Shirin exists. In Europe people were largely ignorant of events taking place in the Orient. Shirin remained literally unheard-of until the Austrian Orientalist Josef von Hammer-Purgstall rediscovered the motif towards the end of the eighteenth century in Constantinople. He therefore contributed the primary research to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Westöstlicher Divan", which places Shirin and Chosroes among the ranks of the greatest lovers of the world. Writers and artists of the Romantic period also rediscovered the myth,

which had remained alive in the Orient, where it never sank into obscurity. This book describes the development of the Shirin myth from historical fact to literary fiction and artistic motif and its assimilation into the literature of the Orient and finally, by means of Goethe's work, into the literature of Europe.

I. PERSIA IN THE LATE ANTIQUITY

The evolution of the Shirin motif over the centuries

The connection between eros and power has long had a great fascination for people; in literature, history, and art, “archetypal” (in C. G. Jung’s sense) presentations of this theme have been widely disseminated. The story of the Christian Shirin, who rose to become wife of the Persian shah Chosroes II (590-628), is a fascinating example of the link between eros and power over the centuries, historians, poets, and artists have taken an interest in her, and she has retained a presence in both East and West until the present day. Contemporary Byzantine and Syriac writers, such as the Church historian Evagrius, the monk Strategios of St. Saba near Jerusalem, the Byzantine imperial secretary Theophylaktes Simokattes—author of the anonymous “Syriac Chronicle”—and the Armenian Pseudo-Sebeos, referred to the Christian queen in their works, which represent the first stage of the history of the Shirin theme. Around the year 800 the Byzantine historian Theophanes Confessor attempted to place these events in his chronicle of world history. Only vague reports, preserved for us in the Frankish “Chronicle of Fredegar,” reached the West in the seventh century, but in the Orient, Shirin remained

a presence, especially in her faith community, the "Apostolic Church of the East," which is usually referred to in the West by the incorrect name "Nestorian." The "East Syriac Chronicle" of Seert in Kurdistan and the twelfth-century patriarchal biographies of the Syrian Mar ibn Sulaiman represent the second stage, as it were, of reception and reworking of this theme, in a time which no longer had any immediate connection to the events, as political circumstances had changed dramatically.

After the historians, poets and artists also discovered Shirin's story, and she became a literary motif, most prominently in the Islamic regions after the end of the Persian Sassanian Empire; around 1030 the Persian Firdausi produced his immortal epic, the "Shah Namah," one of the most significant works of world literature, which presented the history of Iran from its beginnings to the end of the Sassanian Empire. Thus was a third stage achieved: Shirin was now removed from her religious and political context and became a symbol of national history and an ideal type of the lover. At the end of the twelfth century, the Azerbaijani poet Nizami wrote his renowned epic poem, "Chosroes and Shirin," which inspired countless imitations and was repeatedly illustrated with paintings by Islamic miniaturists. Through the conflation of the Shirin saga with the entirely unhistorical myth of the carpenter Ferhad and their purported love affair, which stood at the center of the fifteenth-century Turkish poet Ali Schir Navai's epic "Ferhad and Shirin," presentations of the events became ever further removed from their historical roots. Through miniature paintings from Afghanistan, Persia, and India, the story became known far and wide. It was continually embellished and was eventually even made into a shadow play.

With the Enlightenment, Europeans developed an interest in Oriental themes, as well; in 1809 Josef von Hammer published his work "Schirin," in which he presented to a European audience free renderings of the works of various Persian and Arabic poets. This project inspired Goethe to write his *Western-eastern Divan*. In this way, the theme entered its fourth stage, in which forgotten material from the period marking the shift from antiquity to the Middle Ages was revived in Europe.

A Christian in Zoroastrian Persia as wife of a shah, who reputedly had 12,000 women in his harem—such a topic forces the author, who seeks to make complex material available to today's public, to confront certain methodological issues. A primary problem in the interpretation of the original sources is that the rich literature of Late Antique Persia has, with the exception of a few inscriptions, been entirely destroyed and is available to us at best in works of Muslim writers, who, like Firdāusi, used the earlier material but lived centuries after the events described and were thus limited by the worldview of their time. In this case, Byzantine literature hardly offers a substitute, as in the Eastern Roman Empire people showed little interest in events which occurred beyond the imperial borders. Moreover, Shirin did not belong to the Orthodox imperial Church but rather to the "Persian Church," the "Church of the East," and later to the West Syriac Church, unjustly characterized as "Monophysite," whose members were also called "Jacobites." For centuries the Syriac Churches were persecuted by the Byzantine imperial Church, to the extent that in the seventh century some of them welcomed the Arabs as liberators. For a citizen of Byzantium, empire and Church were one and the same and were therefore justified in all their actions; every war for the defense of

the empire was considered just. Today's readers will find nearly incomprehensible the hatred with which the Orthodox Church persecuted those Christians who used Syriac, Coptic, or Persian, rather than Greek, as their liturgical language. In Constantinople and Rome people had no idea that the "Persian Church" had already spread to India and in the seventh century extended along the Silk Road to Central Asia and China. It always remained a minority Church and pursued an entirely different strategy of inculturation than that favored by Orthodoxy, which held fast until the present day to the alliance between "throne and altar."

The repeated waves of violence that devastated the Orient during the medieval and modern periods present a further difficulty. The Mongol hordes, as well as the forces of Tamerlane, the Seljuks, and the Ottomans, each contributed to the destruction of rich cultural treasures of art and literature. Since the seventeenth century, numerous manuscripts have been taken from the Orient to Rome, Oxford, Paris, and London, but the greater part of Oriental cultural heritage has been lost forever; other works, such as the East Syriac "Chronicle of Seert"—the most important Christian work of the Sassanian era—have been preserved only in fragments. The 1453 conquest of Constantinople resulted in the complete loss of the rich archive of the Byzantine emperor; in this region only bits and pieces of a great literary heritage survive. For this reason, it is all the more gratifying that despite these disasters, which befell Oriental Christianity again and again, valuable remnants of this magnificent literary tradition have been preserved in Armenia, Georgia, Syria, and Egypt. One who has studied the great manuscript collection of Matenadaran in Eriwan can only marvel at the care and rigor with which the remains of this literature were protected in Armenia;

no other people in the world has shown such a love for their manuscripts as have the Armenians!

The historian who is obliged to investigate Byzantine, Syrian, Armenian, Georgian, Coptic, and Ethiopian sources in order to create a picture of the transistional period linking antiquity to the Middle Ages, must adopt an interdisciplinary approach; as he or she cannot become an expert in all the relevant languages, reliance upon translations is necessary. Unfortunately, a number of Oriental sources have been fully registered and made available in Western languages. On the other hand, all the works of the first and second stages in the development of the Shirin motif are available in relatively recent editions; new discoveries are still possible, but, generally speaking, we already have a clear picture. The figure of Queen Shirin may remain rather obscure since contemporary authors never made her the subject of a work; thus the author is all the more pleased to present with this work the first biography of the Christian queen. The inevitable vagueness of the picture also stems from the fact that, in the Oriental world, women as a rule did not stand at the center of literary, artistic, or historiographical projects, at least not to the extent that Chosroes II might have—and yet even his biography remains to be written. The Western reader's unfamiliarity with the Eastern world also makes imperative the inclusion of occasional excurses to address certain questions and thus spare the reader the need to look up all the unfamiliar terminology he or she encounters.

The “Constantinian turning point” and the creation of an imperial Church

Christianity emerged as an underground movement in the Roman Empire. It cannot be unambiguously

determined when it first established a foothold in the new Persian empire of the Sassanians, founded around 220 C.E. An inscription by the Zoroastrian priest Kirdir (K arder, Kartir), from c. 280, indicates that there were at that time already several Christian communities established in the empire. While the imperial Church of the Romans had been controlled by the emperor since the reign of Constantine, who in 325 had called the first "ecumenical" council at Nicea, which formulated the Christian creed, in Armenia, Georgia, Ethiopia, and the Persia Empire, Churches developed without the influence of the emperor. The emperor convened councils, such as the First Council of Constantinople in 381. It was possible for Christians outside the empire to adopt certain decisions of the councils, but this did not compromise their independence from Rome or Byzantium. During the period of persecution, the organization of an overarching ecclesiastical system would have been entirely impossible in any case.

At the Council of Nicea in 325, Rome was recognized as the metropolitan see of the West, as were Alexandria for Egypt and Antioch for "all Asia" (as far as it was part of the Roman Empire). At the Second Council of Constantinople, the Western bishops were not even present; it established the precedence of Constantinople as a metropolitan see, whose bishop enjoyed a position second only to that of the Pope, "for this city is the new Rome." For centuries, Constantinople was the *de facto* center of the imperial Church, especially after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (476). In 395 Emperor Theodosius divided the empire between his sons Honorius (in the West) and Arkadios (in the East). An interminable conflict arose from the fact that, in the Greek and Latin-speaking regions, the imperial Church had

made the Greek edition of the New Testament the foundation of its Church and worship, while in the Syriac-speaking Orient, Christians used the Syriac "Pshitta" or the "Gospel harmony" of the Syriac Tatian (second century). The distinction between the Greek theology, which used the philosophical terminology of Platonism, and the more biblically-oriented Syriac theology was also social; in large cities such as Antioch, the Greek approach held sway, while in rural areas, the Syriac was favored. At the end of the second century, Edessa in northern Syria (present day Urfa in Turkey) developed into the center of Syriac literature and culture.

The differences between the imperial Church and the Church of the East

The dogmatic differences between the imperial Church and the Syrians arose by and large from merely linguistic issues. Today, after 1800 years of disagreement, the "ecumenical movement" has gradually come to the realization that the conflict over words was senseless and has harmed Christianity immensely. The councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) led to the most fateful split in the Christendom of antiquity; first came the break with the East Syriac "Church of the East," which was accused of being "Nestorian." It was implied that they failed to emphasize equally the two natures of Christ, the human and the divine. Following Chalcedon, the West Syrians were charged with being "Monophysites" and denying the human nature of Christ. Today, after a millennium and a half the—rather late—conclusion has been reached that it was really only a debate over semantics. The "Orthodox" emperors of Byzantium made the mistake of attempting repeatedly, with ever-new methods, to force the two Syriac Churches (the West Syriac

“Jacobite” and the East Syriac “Nestorian”), as well as the Armenian and Coptic-Ethiopian Churches, into subordination to the imperial Church and recognition of its dogma. This battle fought on a false front irreparably damage relations between the West and Byzantium, which was later nearly destroyed by the expansion of Islam. Rome and Constantinople, however, found themselves in the same boat in this struggle. Along with Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, Jerusalem was recognized as the fifth metropolitan see; from this point on, the “Pentarchy” was in place, and Christianity was to be led polycentrically from these five centers. But the reality was different: Alexandria and Antioch moved farther and farther away from the imperial Church. The emperors tried valiantly but in vain to install adherents of the imperial Church in these sees. The “Jacobite” Patriarchs of Antioch usually lived in remote monasteries. The Islamic conquest freed them from the emperors’ regular efforts at reunion.

The “Persian Church” had nothing to do with these councils. In the empire of the Sassanians, Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion. The Christians were often seen as sympathizers of the imperial Church and were therefore persecuted. Around 280 the Zoroastrian mobed (priest) Kirdir referred to the persecution of “Kristiyan” (Christians) and “Nacara” (Nazarenes). During occasional incursions into the empire, many Christians were taken prisoners and deported to Persia or along the Silk Road, where a “West Syriac” Church (made up of these resettled Christians) soon developed alongside the “East Syriac.” The “Church of the East” organized itself according to the model of the Emperor Constantine, much like the imperial Church. The bishop of the imperial capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon gradually came to occupy, with the

support of the king (or “shah”), the position of “Catholicos,” head of the Christians in the Empire. At the time of the Council of Nicea, Papa was the first metropolitan of whom we have certain proof.¹ Like the metropolitans of Rome and Constantinople, he soon claimed jurisdiction over the other bishops of the Persian Empire. Opposition came most significantly from the bishop of Susa, where there had been Christians earlier than in Seleucia-Ctesiphon and whose Christians later refused to acknowledge the primacy of the capital. The shahs occasionally persecuted the Christians, as they did at times the religion of Mani († c. 276), which arose in the third century. But they soon recognized that the Christians were loyal citizens and good administrators. They never tried to force Church and state to merge as had been done in Byzantium.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476), a political vacuum developed in the West. Around 450, during the invasion of the Huns, the Roman bishop Leo I had used the situation to his advantage and built up a strong position in Rome, which he tried to extend through representatives he sent to the Council of Chalcedon. At the end of the sixth century, Pope Gregory I also attempted to involve himself in the affairs of the Eastern Roman Empire. Like Antioch, Rome appealed to its founding by the Apostle Peter. Later the evangelist Mark was claimed as the alleged founder of the Church of Alexandria, as was the Apostle Andrew of the Church of Byzantium. The Church of Ctesiphon also had drawn up lists of bishops, which traced its lineage back to the Apostle Thomas (whose grave was venerated in Edessa)

1 Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler: *The Church of the East. A concise History*, London 2002 and: *Die Apostolische Kirche des Ostens*, Klagenfurt 2000, 15.

and to Addai—who was allegedly one of the 72 apostles of Jesus—or his student Mari. In the Persian Church, as well, attempts were made to construct an “apostolic succession.”

The “Apostolic Church of the East” spread beyond the boundaries of Iran into India and China. According to the “Chronicle of Seert,” between 295 and 300 the Arab bishop David of Basra carried out missionary activities in India. In the third century the legend developed that the Apostle Thomas had traveled to India as a missionary. Even to this day, in Mylapore, close to Madras, his grave is venerated. The “Thomas Christians” still believe in the apostolic origins of their Church, origins which cannot be proven historically. The expansion of the Persian Church’s influence came at just the right time for the Sassanians. The so-called “Nestorian crosses” in Mylapore and Kottayam (Kerala) feature inscriptions in Pehlevi (Middle Persian), which was used along with Syriac as a liturgical language in the Church of the East and is still used as such in Kerala today.

By the end of Late Antiquity, the Christian Churches had become national Churches. This characteristic has been most clearly maintained in the Armenian, Coptic, and Ethiopian Churches, which belong to the so-called “Monophysite” branch—to which the West Syriac Church, whose groundwork was laid by the monk Jacob and which is therefore also called “Jacobite,” also belongs; today the West Syrians call themselves the Orthodox Church of Syria, and their patriarch resides in Damascus. The East Syriac Church remained a minority Church in the Persian Empire. It spread to India, Central Asia, and China. Those Christians who lived outside the Byzantine Empire yet still tended toward the imperial Church were called “Melkite” (after the Syriac word for emperor).

Today's Melkites in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, however, have long since adopted the Arabic language. Practically speaking, the imperial Church remained limited to the territory of the Byzantine Empire. In the Orient it could only maintain a presence in the large cities, while the Jacobite and Coptic Churches predominated among the rural populace. The missionary activity of the Orthodox in the East ended after Chalcedon. Nevertheless, through the Christianization of the Slavs in the Middle Ages, the Orthodox Church once again broadened its sphere of influence considerably.

The "Apostolic Church of the East" and other religions in the Persian Empire

Due to persecutions of the Turks and Kurds, the East Syrian "Apostolic Church of the East" has shrunk to become the smallest Church of the East today, and emigration of Christians from Iraq and Iran has led to its virtual disappearance in the Orient. However, in antiquity and the early and high Middle Ages, it was a thriving Church with schools and a significant academic infrastructure; in the early Middle Ages, in its territory was much greater than the region under the influence of the Pope in Rome. The seventh-century Chronicle of Arbela goes back to the first century. It reports the situation of the Christians during the overthrow of the Parthians by the Sassanians (226). Following the long period of persecution under Shapur II (341-379), a consolidation came about under his successor Yesdegerd I. In 410 the shah convened a synod in Ctesiphon, at which the Nicene creed was adopted and the hierarchy of the Persia Church was renewed under Catholicos Isaac. At the councils of 410, 420, and 424, the metropolitan of the imperial capital was recognized as Catholicos of the entire Church of the

East. He was also supposed to supervise the introduction of a calendar based on the Western model. In regular synods, the constitution of the Church was standardized along Western lines. At the time there were six ecclesiastical provinces: Babylonia, Susiana (Khusistan in southern Iraq), northeastern Mesopotamia, Mesene on the Persian Gulf with Basra, Adiabene with Arbela in Kurdistan and Garamaea. In 424, Herat in Afghanistan was also recognized as a bishopric, as was Samarkand in the fifth century. Soon Central Persia and Merv in Turkmenistan became new metropolitan sees.

In 424 a broader synod held by Catholicos Dadisho ruled that appeal to the Patriarch of Antioch was improper. With this, complete independence from the imperial Church was declared. In 484 the Persian Church adopted a (Syriac) creed, which emphasized the two natures ("kyane") of Christ, the human and the divine; ever since then, it has been described as "Nestorian," though this is theologically and historically incorrect and therefore ought not be used any longer.

Edessa, the center of the Syriac Church, belonged to the Byzantine Empire. When Emperor Zenon closed its university in 489, many theologians moved to the city of Nisibis in the Persian Empire. A theological university was established there and became a center for East Syriac Christians. Under Shah Kavād I (488-531) the "Apostolic Church of the East" became the only Church permitted in the Persian Empire. However, West Syriac communities continued to exist, as well. Acts of the martyrs and councils, as well as chronicles, present a picture of a growing Church. At the council of 499 it was declared that patriarchs and bishops could marry once; at a later council, in 545, this regulation was retracted. The monk Abraham of Kaskar in Iraq remained in Egypt for a time;

upon his return, he instituted stricter monastic guidelines in the Church of the East. The persecutions of Oriental Christians by the Byzantine emperors Justin and Justinian I made it impossible for the Christians of the Orient ever again to join together in defense against the Persians or Arabs. Because the West views the Orient principally through the lens of Greek-Byzantine culture, the European perspective is often one-sided. West Syriac historians such as John of Ephesus (sixth century) offer a picture of the world of Oriental Christians which is unfortunately not at all well known. East Syriac authors are still less familiar in Europe. Even during the time of the Crusades, people in Europe heard virtually nothing about the Church of the East.

Of the great councils, the Church of the East recognized only those of Nicea and Constantinople (381). Since then it has gone its own way. Since the fifth century, persecution has occurred only rarely. Many Christians assumed influential positions at the court of Ctesiphon. East Syriac scholars translated numerous Greek writings into Syriac; in this way Greek philosophy was transmitted to the Arabs. In the sixth century conflict erupted in present-day Yemen when the Jewish king Dhu Nuwas persecuted Christians in the oasis of Nagran. This led to one of the few cases of cooperation between the imperial Church under Justin I and Justinian and the "Monophysite" King Caleb of Ethiopia. The East Syriac Catholicos Silas also entered into the negotiations as a representative of the Persian shah's interests. With Byzantine assistance, Ethiopian troops crossed the Red Sea in 525 and gained a foothold in Yemen, which was conquered by the Persians decades later.

Over the course of the sixth century, the "Church of the East" became a highly regarded institution in the

empire of the Sassanians. Under Shah Hormizd IV the Church received great support. Catholicos Ishoyahb I of Arzum (582-596) supported the shah and had reservations about the plans for a coup toward the end of his reign. In the seventh century, according to the anonymous "Syriac Chronicle," compiled around 680 and named for its editor Guidi, the metropolitan Elias of Merv converted the khagan of the Turks, whose first troops had reached the Orient as early as the end of the sixth century, in the south of Syr-Darja. In 635 the monk Alopen arrived at the court of the Chinese emperor in Changan (today Xian); this began the successful missionary activity of the "Apostolic Church of the East" in China, as it expanded ever farther east along the Silk Road.

Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism in Iran

Zoroastrianism, which today has been reduced to a small minority religion in Iran and around Bombay, is among the oldest religions of humanity. Zarathustra, its founder, probably lived long before the start of the early Persian Empire. While the Zoroastrians date Zarathustra's birth to around 1500 BCE.² Western scholars place him in the ninth or eighth century³. Tradition holds that the "Avesta," the holy book of the Zoroastrians, was preserved on ox hides in the old imperial capital of Persepolis until Alexander the Great had the city burned. Later the priests rewrote the texts from memory. Three-quarters of the Avesta may have been lost; of the remainder, only the sixteen hymns or sermons in verse

2 Khojestre P. Mistree: Zoroastrianism. An ethic Perspective, Mumbai 1997, 9.

3 Bernfried Schlerath: Die Gathas des Zathustra, in: Zarathustra, ed. by B. Schlerath (= Wege der Forschung 169), Darmstadt 1970, 336–359, here 354.

form, called "gathas," are traced back to Zarathustra himself. The meter of the gathas resembles that of the Indian Vedas, to which they are related in terms of both language and content. All the other texts (except for the gathas) comprise the so-called "newer Avesta," to which belong in particular the yasts (prayers and hymns of praise). The translation of the text of the Avesta into Middle Persian during the Sassanian period indicates that even that early it was not, strictly speaking, fully understood. The content of the gathas cannot be characterized as Zoroastrian. The known records of the Avesta appear to date back to the Sassanian period, but the oldest Middle Persian (Pehlevi) manuscripts come from the thirteenth century.⁴

According to Zoroastrian tradition, the prophet Zarathustra (Gr. Zoroaster) lived in eastern Iran. He obviously had to flee there to escape persecution. He then succeeded in converting the count Vischtaspa. He surrounded himself with a group of disciples and began an armed struggle against his enemies. He was obsessed with thoughts of punishing evil and rewarding good. For him, the highest god was Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), who was invoked repeatedly in the inscription of Behistun. "A dialogue takes between the divinity and the prophet, and this is the novel aspect of Zoroaster."⁵ He called him to be a prophet, who would proclaim salvation to the world. Whoever obeyed his word would achieve perfection and immortality. The individual was called to follow the example of God, who had created the world through thought. The prophet turned against the orgiastic

4 Josef Wiesehöfer: *Das antike Persien*, Düsseldorf–Zürich, 2.ed. 1998, 211.

5 Richard Frye: *Persien bis zum Einbruch des Islam*, Essen 1975, 68.

polytheism, mythology, and cult mechanisms of popular religion and against the rites, the cult of sacrifice, and the excessive use of intoxicants Haoma. Ahriman is his polar opposite, precursor of the Christian devil. After death, the "last judgment" determines whether a person is sent to heaven or hell. In its eschatology (doctrine of the end of the world), the renewal of the world is placed in the far future. Before that, the radical reordering of the world will be accomplished through the meting out of rewards and punishments.

The world is divided into the evil and the good, which should fight against evil. On Judgment Day, the dead will rise, be judged, and become immortal. The resurrection of the dead is proclaimed in the context of the renewal of the world and judgment of the dead. This conclusive "transfiguration" includes the last judgment, with its punishment of evil and rewarding of good. The expectation of the end of the world and the "Last Judgment" is projected into an eschatological future, which can be predicted. Even today in Zoroastrianism the dead are placed upon the "towers of silence" so that vultures may carry them off to "heavenly burial." Zarathustra was transformed through myth and viewed in Greece as a great magician and author of apocryphal holy scriptures. Platon described him as "the son of god." The worldview of Zoroastrianism is characterized by the struggle and dualism between good and evil and by contemplation of the origin of evil. The battle between the two worlds, the light and the darkness, appears in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well. The struggle against its enemies and its expansion through force are part of the heritage that Christianity, Islam, and Marxism received from Persian religion. In all these systems, the battle against the enemies—those who refuse to be

“saved” or “converted”—plays a central role. Likewise, Christian eschatology, the doctrine of the Last Things and the Final Judgment, shows characteristics similar to that of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism had “from the beginning no strong national character. Though the prophet turned first to his countrymen and then to the Aryans in general, nothing stood in the way of foreigners adopting his teachings. The proper veneration of Ahura Mazda, the increase of his empire, is tied up with no nationality or land.”⁶ Zoroastrians themselves recognize that over the course of the centuries, their religion has distanced itself from its original objectives. During the period of the Sassanians, the prophetic religion became a state Church; as would be the case later in Christianity, the apocalyptic qualities of Zoroastrianism began to lose significance. For this reason, the “return to the roots” plays an important role today among Parsis and the Zoroastrians of India. The great tragedy of Zoroastrianism lies in the fact that after the death of its founder, no further prophets appeared. The cult, which had held little significance for Zarathustra, became ever more formalized; the external cultic “purity” took the place of the internal Polytheism returned.

In ancient Persia, the war of Xerxes against Greece was fought also as a battle against the “Deavas,” the polytheistic cult. This was used to legitimize the destruction of the Acropolis. In inscriptions of King Ataxerxes, the goddess Anahita and Mithra were invoked. No direct evidence supports the existence of a “pure” Zoroastrianism in ancient Persia. The information provided by the few sources available from the Sassanian

6 Eduard Meyer: *Geschichte des Altertums*, Vol. IV/1, 8. Ed., Darmstadt 1981, 119.

period offers us no unified picture of the religion of the Persians. Whether Zoroastrianism was really a state religion remains open to debate. It has been determined that at the beginning of the Sassanian era, the cult of the goddess Anahita played a significant role. One can speak of a state Church first during the reign of Bahram II (276-293).⁷ For decades, Shapur II (309-379) persecuted Christians. Under Ardaschir II (379-383), the god Mithra appeared for the first time in a stone relief carving. But what is "orthodox Zoroastrianism"? It is methodologically questionable to attribute the beliefs of today's Parsis and Iranian Zoroastrians to those of the Sassanian era. One gets the impression that the worldview of Zarathustra was in later periods eclipsed by other influences. In Europe, the Avesta first became known in 1771 through its translation by Anquetil du Perron. Herder was among the first intellectuals to take an interest in the problematic of Persian religion.

There were other religious groups in Persia, as well. The Mandaean sect of the Gnostics has remained active to this day at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. The founder of another religion, Mani, also came from a Gnostic sect. After an alleged revelation, he undertook a missionary journey to India and converted Peroz, the brother of Shapur I, who granted him an audience in 242. It is possible that the king wanted to keep both options open. The Zoroastrian priest Kirdir plotted against Mani, who died in prison under Bahram I. The prophet dedicated his work "Schabuhragan," written in Middle Persian, to Shah Shapur; he produced other tracts in Syriac or East Aramaic. The fifth-century "Cologne Mani Codex"

7 Klaus Schippmann: *Grundzüge der Geschichte des sassanidischen Reiches*, Darnstadt 1990, 93.

offers a glimpse into the life of this syncretic religion, which spread by means of an active missionary movement to India and Central Asia. Manichean text such as the “Cephalalaia,” which may be traced back to Mani’s students, are also preserved in Coptic manuscripts from Egypt, as well as in Middle Persian, Old Turkish, and Chinese texts discovered along the Silk Road.

Manichaeism considered itself a universal religion. Earlier religions were regarded as “incomplete.” Mani presented himself as the bringer of the final revelation: “As Buddha came to India, Zarathustra to Persia, and Jesus to the lands of the West, so this prophecy came through me, Mani, finally to the land of Babylon.”⁸ He recognized these three founders of religions as sent by God, but he wanted to purify their teachings. From Christianity he adopted the idea of a “paraclete” (Holy Ghost, helper, advocate for God, Spirit); from India, the transmigration of souls, and from Zoroastrianism, the dualism of darkness and light. He wanted to use language which would be understood by the other religions, as well. Mani believed humanity was held captive by evil and needed to be freed. Freedom could only come through “gnosis,” the salvific, “true” knowledge. Gnosis alone leads to salvation; ignorance is the result of mixing spirit and body. In the beginning, light and darkness existed apart from one another. Alongside God reigned the “Prince of Darkness”—in Zoroastrianism, Ahriman for Christians, the devil. When the prince of darkness sought to enter the kingdom of light, God forced him back. God created humanity and, in a second creation, called upon the “Paraclete” (Spirit). Although for a time desire compelled humans to pair up and reproduce,

8 Gustav Mensching: *Die Söhne Gottes. Aus den Heiligen Schriften der Menschheit*, Wiesbaden w.y., 199.

Adam, the "first envoy," was finally saved by "Jesus the Radiant." In the "Third Phase," the "great war" begins with the Last Judgment, in which humans will be saved by Christ, as matter is again separated from spirit. The fate of humans after death depends on the category to which they belong: the awakened one will enter the realm of light, the person who fought for religion and justice but who is not yet entirely free will be purified through a cycle of reincarnation, but the evil one, who is held captive by sensuality, will go to hell. True religion consists, therefore, in the destruction of the evil creation. The "elect" must practice the strictest asceticism, in order to escape the prison of demonic forces. Hostility toward sexuality is a legacy which Christianity adopted from Manichaeism.

During the third and fourth centuries, Manichaeism spread from Persia through Asia Minor and into Europe and North Africa. It retreated at times but remained in Africa until the eighth century and spread in the seventh century to China, where it survived until the fourteenth century. In 763 the Khan of the Uighur converted; Manichaeism became the state religion in his empire. The Bogumil in Bulgaria and the Paulicians in Armenia appear traceable to him. Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, and Muslims all considered Manichaeism to be outright heresy. Its spiritual influence is also noticeable in the medieval Christian crusades.

In addition to Manichaeism, there were other religious movements in the Sassanian Empire, such as that of the Jews. Due to the Sassanians' tolerant attitude toward the Jews, significant numbers of these came to Babylon, which boasted the largest Jewish community in the world. Here, at the end of the fifth century, the Jewish scholars edited the "Babylonian Talmud," which standardized Judaism

in the Diaspora. Even into the twentieth century, Jewish communities continued to exist in Iran. Alongside the Jews and the East Syriac Christians, the “Monophysite” Armenians, who adopted Christianity after 301, also played a role in the Persian Empire. For centuries, Armenia practiced a policy of seesawing back and forth between the Orthodox empire of the Byzantines and the empire of the Sassanians. While Georgia maintained its ties with Orthodoxy, Armenia rejected union with the imperial Church and remained allied with the so-called “Monophysitism.” The final split occurred in 552 with the introduction of a separate Armenian calendar; this was proclaimed year 1 of a new reckoning of time.

In the mid-seventh century, Iran was conquered by the Muslims and Islamicized; in Iran, however, the “New Persian” script survived. The large majority of Muslims in Iran belonged to the “Shia.” The Shi’ites, who consider Caliph Ali (†661) their founder, still observe the death of Ali’s son Husain, who died in 680 in Kerbela. Husain’s grave in Kerbela, Iraq, became one of the holiest sites for the Shia, who rose to become the dominant group in Iran.

II. CHOSROES II (590-628) AND SHIRIN: THE PERSIAN ROYAL COUPLE

Bahram Cobin, the Usurper

The East Roman Empire and the Persian Empire of the Sassanians were the chief contenders for hegemony in the Near East. After the death of Emperor Julian, his successor Jovian (363-364) had to sign a peace treaty with Shapur II, the terms of which required that the Romans hand over to the Persians five border provinces conquered by Diocletian, containing eighteen fortresses and including the important metropolis of Nisibis (Nusaybin). The thirty-year peace left the greater part of Mesopotamia and Armenia in the hands of the Persians; in 387 the border treaty was renewed. Shah Chosroes I reformed the state and expanded the empire from Georgia on the Black Sea to Yemen. When Emperor Justinian had the Platonic academy closed, Chosroes brought the scholars to Persia and founded the renowned academy of Gondeschapur. He had the Avesta codified and the myths and legends collected; the game of chess was introduced from India. The land was surveyed for the first time; an accurate count of people, olive trees, and date palms ensured the state a steady income.

Despite the “Eternal Peace” (532) with Byzantium, in the spring of 540 Chosroes crossed the imperial border and conquered Antioch, the largest Roman city in the Orient, which was subsequently plundered and its residents deported to Persia. Justinian had to agree to peace and pay 5000 pounds of gold. In 541 Chosroes advanced on Lazika (Georgia) and established a bridgehead on the Black Sea. Only General Belisar’s push into Mesopotamia forced the Persians to retreat. In 543 the Persians defeated a great Byzantine army in Armenia. Armenia succeeded in extricating itself from East Roman paternal oversight; in 552 the new “Monophysite” calendar was introduced, beginning with year 1. At this time, the “Turks” appeared in the Orient for the first time under this name. Their ruler allied himself with Chosroes against the empire of the Hephthalites (white Huns) in present day Turkmenistan. In 561 a peace treaty was concluded, guaranteeing religious freedom for Zoroastrians in Persia and Christians in Byzantium for fifty years. In 572 war broke out again between Persia and Byzantium; it lasted twenty years under the emperors Justin II, Tiberius, and Maurice.

The Byzantines tried in vain to conquer Nisibis. The Roman frontier fortress of Dara stood at a distance from the Persian fortress of Nisibis; Dara was conquered by the Persians in 573. According to the chroniclers, Chosroes carried off 292,000 prisoners and gave the 2000 most beautiful Christian women to the khan of the Turks, in order to win his allegiance. In 574 Chosroes established a one-year armistice with the payment of 45,000 gold pieces. The empress persuaded her husband Justin II to elevate the general Tiberius to co-emperor; in 578 he became the first Greek emperor.

In 582, prior to his death, Tiberius designated the capable general Maurice, who had reorganized the army

on the Persian front, as his successor.⁹ After Tiberius's death, Maurice, who had married the emperor's daughter, was made emperor. In 581 Maurice defeated the Persian shah Hormizd IV (579-590), the son of Chosroes I, who had informed Emperor Tiberius of the start of his reign in a pompous fashion. In the person of Maurice, Byzantium had for two decades a capable and energetic ruler, whose biography was written by the Egyptian historian Theophylaktes Simokates. He created the exarchates (administrative districts) of Ravenna and Carthage, which encompassed the remaining portions of the Byzantine Empire in North Africa and Italy. Eastern historians consider him the start of the line of "Greek emperors." After the 586/87 victory of General Philippikos at Solachon, not far from the border fortress of Dara, during the Persian-Byzantine war (572-591), Hormizd IV sent the East Syrian catholicos Ishoyahb I to Maurice, who received him warmly. The catholicos gave the emperor a creed, which the emperor had examined by the patriarch, who declared it orthodox and without error, and this led to a joint celebration of the Eucharist.

Bahram Cobin, the capable general from the ancient Iranian royal line of the Arsakides, who was born near the present day city of Teheran and had served Chosroes I in the field against the Armenians, succeeded in defeating the Turks, who were threatening Persia from the East.¹⁰ When the popular commander—who, as a member of the

9 Wilhelm Baum: Maurikios, in: *De Imperatoribus Romanis* (www.roman-emperors.org); the same: Maurikios, in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon* 20, 2002, 998–2000; *The Cambridge Ancient History* 14: Late antiquity: Empire and successors A.D. 425–600, ed. by A. Cameron, Cambridge 2000, 99–108.

10 A. Sh. Shahbazi: Bahram VI Cobin, in: *Encyclopedia Iranica* 3, London–New York 1989, 519–522.

clan of Mihram, considered himself a descendant of the Arsakidian king—was relieved of his command by the king following an insignificant defeat in Armenia, rebellion broke out in the army. Hormizd tried in vain to remove the popular general Bahram from power. The Persian troops at Nisibis, who had battled the Byzantines again in 589, allied themselves with Bahram. The Persian aristocracy was displeased with the king because he showed favor to Christians and other religious minorities. As the army under Bahram Cobin was advancing on Ctesiphon, on February 6, 590, Hormizd was deposed and blinded in a palace coup by his relatives Bistam and Bindoes, who had been freed from prison. He was thrown in prison. His son Chosroes II “Aparvez” (“the victorious”) fled to Azerbaijan. Bindoes had him sought and extended to him an oath of allegiance; Chosroes was subsequently chosen as the new shah.

Shortly thereafter, Hormizd IV was murdered; it remains an open question whether his son had a hand in the plot. Theophylaktes reported that the son comforted his father and offered him a place at his table; however, his father refused this gesture and was therefore beaten to death. The later Persian historian at-Tabari (†923) put forth that the murder of his father did not accord with the wishes of Chosroes. Theophylaktes, by contrast, wrote, “Chosroes after defiling the prelude of his rule with such pollution, held a festival to celebrate the advent of his power, lavishing much gold on the most distinguished men in the Persian kingdom and leading the masses from prison, thereby pretending that he would not succeed to his father’s inhumanity.”¹¹

11 The History of Theophylact Simocatta, tr. by Michel and Mary Whitby, Oxford (1986), 1997, 112, IV,7.4; see too: Theophylaktos Simokates: Geschichte, ed. by Peter Schreiner (= Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur 20), Stuttgart 1985, 123f.

The young shah Chosroes II needed first to deal with the military commander Bahram Cobin. He tried at first to get the able general on his side and invited him to assume the second position in the empire. He is said to have written in a letter, "Chosroes, king of kings, master of dynasts, lord of nations, prince of peace, saviour of mankind, among the gods a righteous immortal man, a god, the most manifest among men, exceedingly glorious, distinguished in his ancestry, a king who hates war, bounteous, who employs the Asones and preserves the monarchy for Persians, to Bahram general of Persians and our friend. ...we received the royal throne rightfully; we did not overturn Persian customs. ... now we are so firmly confident of not relinquishing the diadem that, even if there are other worlds, we expect to rule over those as well. ... if you wish to prosper, take thought for what is needful."¹²

Nevertheless, Bahram declined and humbly asked the king to surrender the throne. Civil war ensued, in which Bahram held the upper hand at first. We are well informed about these events by the Byzantine historian Theophylaktes Simokates and by Tabari. The earliest witness, however, is the Orthodox Church historian Evagrius Scholastikos from Syria, who died around 593/94. His six-volume "Church History" covers the period from 431 to 593. Like the so-called Pseudo-Sebeos, an Armenian historian of the seventh century, he mentioned no battle between Bahram and Chosroes. Evagrius reported that Chosroes moved against Bahram with an army. However, when he saw that his people were abandoning him, he fled. He implored the God of the Christians to guide his horse wherever God wanted. In

12 Simocatta (1997), 114, IV, 8.4; cf. Wiesehöfer (1998), 226.

this way, he came to Kirkesion, a Byzantine border city on the upper Euphrates. He arrived there with his two wives, his children, and members of the Persian nobility and sent messengers to Emperor Maurice.¹³ The names of the women are not given.

Likewise, the "Syriac Chronicle," dating from between 670 and 680 and named for its editor Guidi, stated that Chosroes did not do battle with Bahram but rather fled.¹⁴ According to the historian Agapius of Hieropolis (Manbig), the Arab Gassanid prince mediated between Chosroes and Maurice. In the accounts of Evagrius and Theophylaktes, he fled to Kirkesium, but according to Syriac sources (Dionysius of Tellmahre), the destination was Edessa.

According to the 602 vita of St. Golanduch, Chosroes is said to have met her in Hierapolis, where Bishop Domitian of Melitene, uncle of Maurice, also was present. Chosroes left Hierapolis on January 9, 591; the saint died on July 13, 591. In the seventh century, the Coptic historian John of Nikiu reported that St. Golanduch prophesied Chosroes's return to the throne.¹⁵ Hagiographies such as this can help clarify the chronology of historical events.

One gets the impression that the politically and militarily inexperienced shah saw no chance against the battle-tested general, who had earlier served his grandfather as army commander. Military might proved

13 *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Scriptores Graeci*, ed. Severin Bini, Coloniae 1612 (contents the work of Euagrius), 881.

14 *Die von Guidi herausgegebene Syriac Chronicle*, ed. by Theodor Nöldecke, in: *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, philosophisch-historische Klasse* 128, 1893, 1–47, here 5 (in future cited as: *Syriac chronicle*).

15 *The Chronicle of John (c. 690 A.D.) Coptic bishop of Nikiu*, ed. by Robert Henry Charles, Amsterdam w.y., 156.

stronger than dynastic legitimacy. Theophylaktes referred to a battle dated February 28, 590, which took place near Ctesiphon. The contemporary Byzantine author and admirer of Maurice also fabricated letters of the Persian king, as if he had knowledge of them. The later Persian historian Tabari also mentioned an encounter between Bahram and Chosroes by a river before the murder of the latter's father; after the battle, he fled. He hurried first to his father at Ctesiphon, who advised him to ask Maurice for help.¹⁶ The Byzantine and Arab historians provide us with a different perspective, since they drew on different sources. Tabari used the lost imperial annals, the "Book of the Lords" ("Xvaday-namag"), which had been compiled in the mid-seventh century and in which Chosroes was described entirely without justification as a hero. The older sources clearly indicate that the shah's flight followed the murder of his father. Additionally, Theophylaktes stated that the Persian shah no longer sought refuge in Mithra but rather in the God of the Christians. For a Zoroastrian king, this is difficult to accept. He also reported that the king left the direction of his flight up to the horse. He received support from the "Romans" (Greek "Rhomaioi") for the retaking of rule. Probos, the governor of the castle, led Chosroes and the women, who were still nursing children, to the city of Hierapolis and told the whole story to the Byzantine commander Komentolios. The commander was stationed in Hierapolis (Manbig) northeast of Aleppo; he passed along the shah's letter to Emperor Maurice, who was delighted with the turn of events on the eastern frontier of his empire. The shah's letter to the emperor, cited by Theophylaktes, is an invention of the author, who had no access to the

16 Tabari: *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sassaniden*, ed. by Theodor Nöldecke, ND Leiden 1973, 274.

emperor's archive. Bindoes, who accompanied his kinsman into flight, repulsed the pursuers sent by Bahram. The East Syriac Catholicos Ishoyahb I did not flee with the king; as a supporter and confidant of Hormizd IV, he presumably did not want to commit himself too quickly. The "Syriac Chronicle" reported that Maurice harshly criticized this decision, as the catholicos was a wise man, and noted that this inspired in the king a great hatred for the ecclesiastical leader. Following Chosroes's return, the catholicos avoided contact with him.

In any case, Bahram marched victoriously into Ctesiphon, where on March 9, 590, he crowned himself "Bahram VI" with the crown of the Arsakides. Apocalyptic ideas about the end of the "millennium of Zarathustra" aided him in this case. In addition, he presented himself as the restorer of the empire of the Arsakides, which had been overthrown by Ardaschir, founder of the Sassanian Empire and a former shepherd. It must have been clear to him that everything depended on the Byzantine emperor, whose troops were massed on the upper Euphrates in Syria. It was assumed that, after decades of war between Byzantium and Persia, he would take advantage of the opportunity to exploit the weakness civil war had caused his enemy.

Chosroes's alliance with Emperor Maurice

Thus both sides had to present offers to Maurice, who could decide the struggle for the throne by supporting one party or the other. Chosroes had the better case, since, as "emperor of the Romans" he defended the principle of legitimate succession and had not worked with generals who conspired against their lords. In Chosroes's letter to Maurice, presumably invented by the historian, Theophylaktes also placed in the king's mouth an appeal

to monarchical legitimacy. Pseudo-Sebeos mentioned Chosroes's letter to the emperor, as well, in which the shah promised the emperor the city of Nisibis, Armenia, and the better part of Georgia. In any event, Bahram failed to capture Chosroes before the latter's entry into Byzantine territory.

Chosroes may have been familiar with the Byzantine idea that the emperor, as "lord of the world" ("oikoumene"), together with the monarchs, constituted a family. If the emperor came into contact with a monarch—as a rule, one of a lower rank—he had first to "adopt" the monarch and accept him into the "family of kings." Such an adoption was naturally associated with a relationship of trust and offered the emperor the chance to integrate neighboring rulers into his system. For Chosroes, this Byzantine ideology was very opportune, while Bahram Cobin, as a "parvenu", had nothing similar to offer the emperor.

According to Byzantine sources, Bahram offered the emperor Mesopotamia up to the Tigris, with Nisibis, while Chosroes offered only Dara, Martyropolis, and a part of Armenia up to Dvin and Tiflis, as well as the payment of an annual tribute. In Armenia Chosroes's uncle Bistam organized the opposition to Bahram, who sent General Zadesprates to Nisibis. However, the city had gone over to Chosroes and repulsed Bahram's army. Bistam established contact with the opposition to Bahram. Chosroes had to wait six or seven months for Maurice's reply.

Maurice had a choice: Bahram offered him peace; Chosroes, on the other hand, was a refugee, whose political and military qualifications remained unknown and whose route home could only be liberated with Roman help. Nevertheless, as the legitimate heir to the throne, he held

the better hand. The parvenu Bahram had to make a better offer. It speaks for Maurice that he turned a deaf ear to the warnings of the senators, transmitted by Pseudo-Sebeos, that the Persians were a people with neither law nor religion; it was also necessary to consider the possibility that after his restoration to power, Chosroes might prove ungrateful.¹⁷ Maurice did not meet personally with Chosroes, who was never in Constantinople. The emperor decided in favor of the principle of legitimacy and ordered the Armenian patriarch John Mystakon and the generals Nerses and Philippikos to support the king, whom he adopted and by whom he was never in his life disappointed. In this way, the emperor succeeded in establishing a lasting peace. “Maurice could have crushed Persia, but finally, and wherever possible for all time, peace was to reign in the East. Of course, he needed this peace to gain control over the Avaric-Slavic pressure in the north. Chosroes II also needed the peace, as internal relations in Persia after the defeat of Bahram showed signs of a dangerous breakdown.”¹⁸

From Firdausi’s “Shah Namah”—which was based on the “Book of the Lords” of the Persian kings, or rather, its translation—we know that at the time of his flight to Byzantium, Chosroes was already married to the Christian Shirin.¹⁹ Pseudo-Sebeos reported the Shirin

17 *Histoire d’Héraclius par l’évêque Sebèos*, tr. par Frédéric Macler, Paris 1904, 15. cf.. Alexander Daniel Beihammer: *Nachrichten zum byzantinischen Urkundenwesen in arabischen Quellen (565–811)* (= *Poikila Byzantina* 17), Bonn 2000, XXXIf u. 16–20, Nr. 12.

18 Frank Thiess: *Die griechischen Kaiser. Die Geburt Europas*, Hamburg–Wien 1959, 284f; cf.: Ernst Honigmann: *Die Ostgrenze des Byzantinischen Reiches*, Bruxelles 1935, 28f.

19 *Prosopography of the later Roman Empire*, vol. 3: 527–641, ed. by J. R. -Martindale, Cambridge 1992, 1144; Wilhelm Baum: *Schirin*, in: *BBKL* 19, 2001, 1294–1296.

came from Khusistan—in today's southwestern Iran.²⁰ The Syriac Chronicle, however, portrayed Shirin as an "Aramaeon"; the term "Aramaje" refers to the province of Kufa in present-day northern Iraq.²¹ The Persian historian Mirchond, clearly from a much later time, stated that Shirin was a servant in a Persian house which Chosroes frequently visited in his youth.²² These later accounts are not confirmed by earlier sources; perhaps they are legends which developed later. Theophylaktes provided no names for the two women who fled with Chosroes to Syria. The Syriac Chronicle told of "two Christian women, the Aramaean Shirin and the Roman Mary," though nothing is said here of the fact that Mary was a daughter of the emperor.²³

The myth of Mary, alleged daughter of the emperor

Later non-Byzantine sources, such as the patriarch and chronicler Eutychius²⁴ (†940), Dionysius of Tellmahre (Chronicle 1234)²⁵, Michael Syrus, and the Arab Tabari, reported that Maurice had his daughter married to Chosroes.²⁶ Arguing against this, however, is the fact that Theophylaktes, who knew Maurice best, said nothing of this. It is unthinkable that he would withhold such

20 The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, ed. by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, vol. 8, London 1923, 383, § 56.

21 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 10.

22 *Shahnama* 8 (1923), 192.

23 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 10.

24 *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien*, ed. by Michael Bredy (CSCO 472, *Scriptores Arabici* 45), Louvain 1985, 97, Nr. 268.

25 *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*, ed. by Andrew Palmer, Liverpool 1993, 117.

26 *Chronique de Michel le Grand*, tr. sur la version arménienne du Prêtre Ischok par Victor Langlois, Venise 1868, 215; *Chronique de Michel le Grand*, éd. p. J. B. Chabot, tome 2, Paris 1901, 372.

information from the public. It is equally unimaginable that the emperor would have given a daughter to the harem of a shah who already possessed women.

Did this alleged Queen Mary even exist? In August 582 the dying emperor Tiberius gave General Maurice his second daughter, Constantina, as a wife; they later had eight children. According to the report of John of Ephesus, Theodosius, the couple's eldest son, was born on August 4, 584. In 590, according to the "Chronicon Paschale," Maurice crowned him co-emperor. At the time of Chosroes's flight, the children of Maurice's marriage could have been at the oldest six to eight years old. After the murder of Maurice, his widow was hidden in a cloister with three of their daughters. However, the "Chronicon Paschale" mentioned specifically that Theodosius was murdered.²⁷ Likewise, the seventh-century West-Syriac Chronicles of Jacob of Edessa, from around 691, reported that all of Maurice's sons were murdered.²⁸ When writing his contemporary work, Theophylaktes used the history of John of Epiphaneia, now largely lost, who, as an adviser to Patriarch Gregory of Antioch, lived there and in Persia. He had as little knowledge of a daughter of the emperor as did Evagrius and the other Byzantine authors. According to Byzantine custom, the daughter of an emperor would only wed a selected ruler of comparable status; it would be unthinkable for her to be one of many wives in the harem of an already married ruler. Thus the Byzantine Mary referred to in the Syriac Chronicle could not have been a daughter of Maurice.²⁹

27 Chronicon Paschale 284–628 AD, tr. by Michael a. Mary Whitby, Liverpool 1989, 143.

28 The Seventh century in the West-Syrian Chronicles (1993), 38 u. 117; Prosopography 3 (1992), 1293f.

29 Ebenda, 827f. Vgl. dazu auch: Alexander Daniel-Beihammer: Nachrichten zum byzantinischen Urkundenwesen in arabischen Quellen (565–811), in: Poikila Byzantina 17, Bonn 2000, 23f, Nr. 15.

The earliest sources to mention Mary were (1) the Syriac Chronicle, (2) the Arab Tabari, (3) Tabari's contemporary, the Melkite patriarch Eutychius, (4) the ninth-century chronicle attributed to the West Syriac patriarch Dionysius of Tellmahre (preserved by Michael Syrus and the Syriac Chronicle of 1234), and (5) the East Syriac Chronicle of Seert, written shortly after 1036. The editor of the Syriac Chronicle (Guidi) reported that the emperor sent his "brother" Theodosius with 60,000 men, led by a man called Sergius, to aid Shah Chosroes. Tabari wrote that the situation had gotten to the point that he sent him his daughter Mary and allowed him to marry her.³⁰ Theophanes Confessor, who also relied on Eastern chronicles, mentioned only Shirin; he knew nothing of Mary. In the eleventh century, (6) Firdausi's history in the "Shah Namah" was further embellished; (7) the historian and patriarch Michael Syrus³¹, who followed the work of Dionysius of Tellmahre and Ignatius of Melitene, and (8) Grigorius Abu l-Farag ("Barhebraeus"), who relied heavily on Syrus, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as (9) The chronicle of 1234 and (10) Mirchond in the fifteenth, told of the rich dowry of the imperial daughter Mary. The Chronicle of Seert offered a solution to the puzzle: it was mentioned here, as well, that Chosroes married Mary, the emperor's daughter; however, another remark in the Arabic text indicates that "the others" call the bride Shirin!³² The

30 Tabari (1973), 283.

31 Chronique de Michel le Syrien, ed. p. J.-B. Chabot, tome 2, Paris 1901, 372.

32 Histoire nestorienne (Chronik von Seert), ed. by Addai Scher, in: Patrologia Orientalis IV/3, Paris 1907; V/2, 1908; VII/2, 1909, in future cited as: Chronicle of Seert (1919, here 466 a. 146 § L VIII). The chronicle used diverse sources as the vita of Sabaryeshu. These sources are sometimes not united to a coherent description.

chronicle of the patriarchs of the East Syriac Mari ibn Sulaiman employed a similar formula, apparently quoting the chronicle, though this equating of Mary and Shirin is not found in the work of his successor Amr ibn Matta.³³ An error appears to have been made here. One can see that the events of 628 era no longer entirely clear to the authors of the Chronicle of Seert, which was made up primarily of the vitae of saints, and that they made an effort to create, from sometimes contradictory sources, a coherent historical narrative.

It is of course possible that Chosroes had a Greek woman named Mary in his harem. The possibly historical Mary from Byzantium, who may have belonged to the shah's harem, was later equated with the "Nestorian" or "revalued" and made queen. In this way, the process was reversed: the historical Shirin became the invented Mary. The sources clearly indicated that Chosroes's eldest son, Siroe (Kavad)³⁴, was not a son of Shirin, who, upon her husband's overthrow, tried to place her own son Merdانشah³⁵ on the throne. Although the names of Chosroes's wives were not given in accounts of the flight, there is no indication that Shirin was at that time his lover or wife. All later embellishments, such as Mary's alleged poisoning by Shirin—mentioned as early as the "Shah Namah"—may well be inventions. The motif of jealousy between the women is of course easy to build on and expand according to the situation. In the final analysis, Shirin is historically verifiable and was a Christian and a queen; Mary—if she was a historical figure at all—was neither Maurice's daughter nor a queen.

33 Maris Amri et Slibae: *De Patriarchis Nestorianorum*, ed. Henricus Gismondi, Roma 1899, 49: „Mauritius, (...) cuius filiam Mariam uxorem duxit, Sirinam etiam appellatam eam alii dicunt“; 2. part, 30: „Sirinae uxori Cosroes“.

34 *Prosopography* 3 (1992), 276f.

35 *ibid.*, 883.

How did Chosroes succeed in regaining power in Iran? In November or December of 590 the military commander Komentolios in Hierapolis received an order from the emperor to receive the refugee king Chosroes and treat him with royal honor. To Chosroes the emperor wrote that he approved of his intention to come to Constantinople, surrender, and await the imperial reinforcements, because otherwise his rival Bahram could use his absence to his advantage. The emperor declared himself to be Chosroes's friend and promised to be a father to him and support him in every way possible; he would send John Mystakon to his aid.³⁶ This clear statement of the emperor gives the lie to the later reports of Mirchond regarding the alleged eighteen-month stay in the imperial capital. Corresponding instructions were issued to John Mystakon, Patriarch Gregory of Antioch, and Bishop Domitian of Melitene, to whom the emperor was related. Clearly evident from the Chosroes's treaty with Maurice is the return to Byzantium of the fortress of Dara, captured by Chosroes I, with Martyropolis (Tigranokerta) and a large part of Armenia.

In later sources, from around the time of the Armenian catholicos John VI, it is also mentioned that the city of Nisibis reverted to Byzantium. However, this seems improbable. In any case, with his far-sighted policies, Maurice succeeded in creating a period of peace for Byzantium, which had been caught up in a war on two fronts, against the Avars in the Balkans and the Persians in the East. Even after his defeat of Bahram, Chosroes conscientiously upheld the treaty.

36 *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches I*: 565–1025, ed. by Franz Dölger, München–Berlin 1924, 12, Nr. 96–98.

When Bahram VI learned that Chosroes was in Hierapolis and had received Byzantine support, he sent envoys to Maurice. Of course, he had to offer more, and he promised to hand over Nisibis and the region to the Tigris, if the emperor would sign a peace treaty with him. Bahram had Chosroes's uncle Bindoes thrown into prison. Some plotted against Bahram, but he quelled the rebellion and had the conspirators trampled to death by his elephants. Bindoes escaped and initiated contact with John Mystakon. Bistam, Chosroes's uncle, also went to Armenia in search of support. When the troops stationed at Nisibis learned that Chosroes and Maurice had established peace, they transferred their allegiance to Chosroes, who in this way regained a foothold in his earlier empire. The city of Martyropolis, conquered under Hormizd IV, was handed over between the end of 590 and the beginning of 591. Thus the peace treaty between Byzantium and Chosroes came into effect early in the year 591. Bahram sent Commander Zadesprates to take on Chosroes, but the commander was murdered on February 9, 591. His head was sent to Chosroes, who was still in Constanina, preparing his counteroffensive against Bahram.

For the military campaign against Bahram, Chosroes first needed money, which he had to borrow from Maurice. The emperor sent him the money and ordered Patriarch Gregory of Antioch to go to him. He called Komentolios back from his command and transferred it to Narses, who traveled to Mardes near Dara with Chosroes and Bishop Domitian in early spring of 591. The Arab tribes in the surrounding area allied themselves with Chosroes, who sent Maurice the key to Dara; Maurice then officially accepted the Persian shah as his "son." Chosroes took his wives to Sinjar for safety and began

the campaign against Bahram. Under the command of Narses, the army advanced some 150 kilometers to Mosul, where they awaited reinforcements from Armenia. Commander Mabad captured Seleucia and Ctesiphon and proclaimed Chosroes shah. Chosroes himself did not enjoy much success. In June 591 Narses defeated Bahram in a battle which took place between Arbil and Kirkuk, after which the general who had led the putsch fled to Persia. The Byzantines could then conclude their campaign and go home. They had achieved their goal of assisting Chosroes's return to power. It was reported that Bahram was supported by the Jews, who were later killed by Chosroes's general Mabad. Peace was definitively established between Byzantium and Persia in autumn of 591. Bahram fled to the Turks in Chorassan, where he later met his death—perhaps at Chosroes's instigation. He had had coins minted and lives on even today as a figure in popular legend; the Samanids of Buchara later claimed to be descended from him.³⁷ After Byzantium came to possess a large part of Armenia, almost reaching the catholicos's see of Dvin, Emperor Maurice tried in vain to unite the Armenian Church with the imperial Church. After the refusal of the Armenian catholicos Movses II to accept Byzantine dogma, the emperor set up an anti-patriarch in the Byzantine part of western Armenia, who remained until around 610, when the Persians recaptured control of the region.

Shirin's pregnancy and the cross of Resafa

Without question, the oldest document relating to the history of Queen Shirin is a letter which Chosroes II wrote

37 Robert Göbl: *Numismatica Byzantino-Persica*, in: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 17, 1968, 165–177, here 172f.

to St. Sergius in Syria—whom he venerated—following his victory over Bahram Cobin and his return to the throne in 591; as such, it ought to be described here in full.³⁸ At the end of his “Ecclesiastical History”³⁹, the contemporary Orthodox Church historian Evagrius wrote:

“When Chosroes became master of his own kingdom, he sent to Gregory (the patriarch of Antioch) a cross that was bedecked with much gold and costly stones, to honour the prize-winning martyr Sergius. Theodora, the wife of Justinian, had dedicated this, but Chosroes had looted it along with the other treasures, as has already been recorded by me. He also sent another golden cross, and Chosroes inscribed the following Greek letters: on the cross :

‘This cross do I give, Chosroes, king of kings, son of Chosroes, after we had come to Romania as a result of the devilish activity and wickedness of the most ill-fated Barames Gusnas (Bahram) and the cavalrymen with him, on account of the approach towards Nisibis of the ill-fated Zadespram with an army for seduction of the cavalrymen in the district of Nisibis to rebellion and commotion; we too sent cavalrymen with an officer to Charchas; and through the fortune of the holy Sergius, the all-revered and renowned, when we heard that he was a granter of requests, in the first year of our reign on the seventh of the month January, we requested that if our cavalrymen should slay or overcome Zadespram; and so, having achieved our request, so that each thing is beyond dispute, to his all-revered name this cross which is from us, together with the cross sent by the Roman emperor

38 Martin J. Higgins: Chosroes II’s votive offerings at Sergiopolis, in: BZ 48, 1955, 89–102, here 90.

39 The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius ed. J. Bidez, Amsterdam 1964, 235–238, § 21; The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus, tr. by Michael Whitby, Liverpool 2000, 312–314, VI, 21.

Justinian to his house, and which was conveyed here in the time of estrangement between the two empires by Chosroes, king of kings, son of Cabades, our father, and which was discovered in our treasuries, we have sent to the house of the holy all-revered Sergius.'" Chosroes's first offering to the shrine of St. Sergius—the golden cross and the cross of Theodora—followed his return to the capital in the summer of 591, this is, between autumn of 591 and spring of 592.⁴⁰

When Gregory, in accordance with the decision of Emperor Maurice, received these crosses, he carried them in a great procession to the shrine of the martyr, where he laid them. Not long thereafter, Chosroes sent other gifts to the temple, including a golden plaque, on which he had engraved the following: "*I, Chosroes, king of kings, son of Chosroes, have written what is on this paten not for the sight of men, nor that the greatness of your all-revered name may be known from my words, but on account of the truth of what is written and on account of the many favours and benefactions which I had from you: for it is good fortune for me that my name should be carried on your holy vessels.*"

During the time that I was in Beramais, I requested of you, holy one, that you come to my assistance and that Siren conceive in her womb. And since Siren is Christian and I a pagan, and our law does not grant us freedom to have a Christian wife. But, on account of my gratitude to you, I disregarded this law, and this one among my wives I held and hold from day to day as legitimate, and thus I decided to beseech your goodness, holy one, that she conceive in her womb. And I requested and ordained that if Siren should conceive in her womb I would send to your all-revered shrine the cross worn by her. And on this account both I and Siren have this purpose, that we should have possession

40 Higgins (1955), 90 u. 98.

of this cross in remembrance of your name, holy one. And instead of it we have resolved to dispatch a value 5000 staters, although it does not extend beyond 4.400 miliary staters.

And from the time when I had the said request in my mind and made this resolution until the time we came to Rosonchosron no more than ten days elapsed, and you, holy one, not because I am worthy but because of your goodness, you appeared to me in a dream at night and thrice said to me that Siren had conceived in her womb. And in the same dream I thrice responded to you saying: 'Good'. And because you are the granter of requests, from that day Siren did not know what is customary for women. But I had doubts about this, but for the fact that I trusted in your words and that you are holy and a granter of requests, after she did not experience what women do, from this I knew the power of the dream and the truth of what you had spoken. And so straight-away I sent the said cross and its value to your all-revered house, ordering that from its value one paten and one chalice should be made for the sake of the divine mysteries, but indeed also that a cross be made which should be fixed on the honoured altar, and a censer all of gold, and a Hunnic curtain decorated with gold; and the miliaresia left over from this sum are for your holy house, so that through your fortune, holy one, in all things but especially in this request, you may come to the aid of myself and Siren, and that what has come to us through your intercession may proceed to completion through the mercy of your goodness and for the wish of myself and Siren; so that I and Siren and everyone in the world may have hope in your power and still trust in you." This is what Chosroes' dedications say, in no way discordant with the prophecy of Balaam: "since the merciful God has wisely provides that heathen tongues should utter words of salvation."

Evagrius's report represents the only information which unquestionably belongs to the sixth century; it is therefore of central importance. An apparently verbatim

copy of the account was included in the fourteenth-century "Ecclesiastical History" of Nikephoros Kallisthes. In the fifth century the shrine of St. Sergius, who was beheaded during the persecutions of Diocletian and buried in Resafa in the upper Euphrates valley, some 100 kilometers east of Aleppo, developed into a pilgrimage site called Sergiopolis and was known throughout the whole Mediterranean region. The diocese became a metropolitan see and was walled in during the reign of Justinian; it was destroyed in the Mongol invasion of 1258. The shrine, which lay within the Byzantine Empire, had a certain appeal for Christians of the Persian Empire, as well. Theophylaktes reported that, during his flight, Chosroes also turned to St. Sergius for aid.

In light of the fact that Theophylaktes told the story and cited the king's letter, the question naturally arises, whether Theophylaktes was familiar with the report of Evagrius, the penultimate chapter of his "Ecclesiastical History." In 591 Chosroes sent two crosses to Patriarch Gregory of Antioch: (1) the cross which Chosroes I had stolen from Antioch and (2) the cross given out of gratitude for the victory over Bahram Cobin; in 593 he promised to St. Sergius (3) a golden plaque with an inscription and another cross for his wife Shirin's pregnancy. Theophylaktes Simokates also referred to a votive cross for Shirin's pregnancy. An important piece of evidence regarding dating is found in the observation that, after his defeat of Bahram VI, Chosroes returned the cross that his grandfather Chosroes I had brought back as a trophy from his campaign against Byzantium to Patriarch Gregory of Antioch, who died in May 592. Besides this, he also gave him a newly made cross. Gregory carried this cross in a procession to Resafa. Theophylaktes made the sequence of events clear: first the initial gift was given;

in the following year Shirin became queen; and in the year after that Chosroes wanted to have a child with her and so made a second offering. Afterwards, Chosroes donated a golden plate (diskos), which was somehow connected to the barrenness of his wife Shirin. With the additional money Chosroes gave, another cross, a chalice, and a paten were to be produced.

In regard to the giving of these gifts, which were related to Shirin's pregnancy, no further mention of Patriarch Gregory was made. In the meantime, his predecessor Anastasius returned to Antioch in March 593.⁴¹ Pope Gregory the Great, who was in contact with the deposed patriarch Anastasius of Antioch, also kept in touch with his successor Gregory.⁴²

Theophylaktes reported that the patriarch had a falling out with the shah because he wanted constantly to instruct Chosroes, so the bishop finally returned to Antioch. Since Evagrius died c. 593/94, this date represents the latest possible date for the birth of Shirin's first child. It is notable that in this report also referred to Shirin as the Christian wife of Chosroes. The Armenian historian Pseudo-Sebeos remarked that Shirin, a Christian from Khusistan, was very beautiful. He described her as "queen of queens"; she founded a church and a cloister near the residence and even preached the gospel in the royal palace.

The account of Theophylaktes Simokates gives the impression that the author used the work of Evagrius,

41 Paul Peeters: *Les Ex-Voto de Khosrau Aparwez a Sergiopolis*, in: *Analecta Bollandiana* 65, 1947, 5–65, here 41: „La source d'Évagrius ce sont les originaux des deux ex-voto qu'il a eus entre les mains.“

42 Christiane Fraise-Coué: *Gregor der Große und der Osten*, in: *Geschichte des Christentums* 3 (431–642), Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2001, 931–961.

particularly in the cases of details regarding dates and the reference to the beheading of Zadesprates. This stated, however, that Chosroes had the votive cross he donated put on the stolen cross from the time of Justinian and that the oath was in effect from January 7 in the "first year of his reign," i.e., the time of coronation on February 15, 590, until February 15, 591. A provincial governor, about whom no more is known, placed the cross in the "Barbicon," the Arab treasury in Sergiopolis. The account continues: "In the following year, the Persian king proclaimed Seirem (i.e., Shirin), a Roman —she was a Christian—queen; in the bloom of her youth, he united with her in marriage, flouting Babylonian convention."

The "following year" meant the period from February 15, 591, to February 15, 592. Shirin thus became queen during the reign of Maurice. It would have been entirely unthinkable that the daughter of an emperor would have played the role of concubine beside a wife. As Chosroes already had wives and children, Shirin may have performed the role of queen. It is not expressly stated, to what extent Chosroes defied Persian custom. It is striking that Theophylaktes portrayed Shirin, who came from Khusistan, as a "Rhomäerin." The term "Christian" is not elaborated further; the dogmatic distinctions between the Imperial Church and the East Syriac Church were in practice rather slight; more significant was the question of who had political control over the Christians. Here the emperor, as the highest power in the Imperial Church, faced the Zoroastrian shah, who held political power over the "Church of the East."

In the next chapter, Theophylaktes reported that, "in the third year" (February 15, 592-February 15, 593), Chosroes asked St. Sergius, "who had already performed great works in Persia," for "Shirin to give him a child."

When the wish was granted, he dedicated a cross to the saint, which he and Shirin nonetheless kept for themselves at first but finally did give away. He also mentioned that the saint prophesied the pregnancy to him in a dream: *“When I was in Berthemais, I begged you, holy one, to come to my aid and to enable Shirin to bear a child. And since Shirin is a Christian and I a pagan, it is forbidden under our laws for me to marry her. Out of my great respect for you, however, I defied this regulation and have considered her, among all my wives, day in and day out as my legitimate spouse, and have treated her accordingly. It is thus very important to me that I ask your kindness, that she might bear a child. I offered and promised that I would donate the cross she wears to your most venerable dwelling if Shirin were to become pregnant. Now, for this reason, Shirin and I intend to keep the cross, as a reminder of your name, holy one. And we decided in its place to give you its worth in money—5000 staters, although the cross (really) is worth no more than 4300 miliaresia stateren⁴³. Since I made this vow and began having such thoughts, not more than ten days passed before we arrived in Reson Choron, and you, holy one, appeared to me—not because I was worthy of this but out of your goodness—in the night as a dream, and you told me three times that Shirin was pregnant. And in the dream I replied three times with the words: good, good. And because of your goodness and mercy, because of your most venerable name, and because you grant what one requests, from that day on, Shirin no longer experienced what usually happens to women.⁴⁴ I had no doubt, rather I trusted your words because you are holy and truly fulfill requests. So when she no longer suffered her monthly period, I recognized the power of the dream and the truth of your words.*

43 This means the value of 4300 silvercoins. One golden coin (nomisma) were 14 miliaresia (byzantine silver coins). The value of the donation was 650 and the value of the cross 307 Nomismata.

44 The period

I immediately sent the cross and its worth in gold to your most venerable shrine with the command that the money be used for a paten and chalice for the divine mystery, but also for a cross, which should be placed on the sacred table, and a thurible, made entirely of gold, and curtains embellished with gold. The remaining milaresias should be designated for your house, so that you, holy one, with your propitious protection, will stand by me and Shirin always, but especially in the case of this request. And that which was granted us through your influence and intercession, may it be fulfilled for me and Shirin, so that Shirin and I and everyone on earth can hope in your power and continue to place our trust in you.”⁴⁵

It is extraordinary that the Zoroastrian shah turned to a Christian shrine which lay within the Byzantine Empire. It is possible that Theophylaktes was familiar with Evagrius's account and created a letter out of the inscription on the plate. From all of this it is doubtless that Shirin was not Chosroes's mistress, but rather his wife; she was also regarded as such by Byzantium. It is unlikely that Chosroes called himself a "pagan." Around this time, Shirin may have borne first a few daughters and then the son called Merdanschah, whom she in 628 favored as successor to the throne, in opposition to Chosroes's elder son Siroe-Kavad.

Chosroes had minted gold dinars and silver drachmas that featured on one side his picture with the crown with the crescent moon but on the obverse the head of a woman in a nimbus of flame. Earlier this image was interpreted to be of Shirin, but today it is believed to be a representation of the Zoroastrian goddess Anahita.⁴⁶

45 Theophylaktos Simokates (1985), 158f.

46 Robert Göbl: Der mehrfache Münzbildrand und die numismatischen Beziehungen zwischen Byzanz und dem Sasanidenreich, in: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 13, 1964, 103–117.

In the contemporary accounts, there is no reference to a Queen Mary. She is mentioned for the first time in the Syriac Chronicle as a Christian "Roman," but not as the daughter of Maurice! Moreover, approximately contemporaneously with the Chronicle of Seert, around the turn of the millennium, the story of the alleged rival also appeared in Firdausi's epic "Shah Namah."

Chosroes finally succeeded in defeating his adversaries and regained control over his empire. He had his former ally Bindoes eliminated because he allegedly had turned against the king. According to the Syriac Chronicle, when the shah marched into battle against Bahram, the image of an old man appeared to him. When he told his wife Shirin about this upon his return from the campaign, she said, "That was Sabaryeshu, the bishop of Lasum." Chosroes took this to heart. The Chronicle of Seert told the story differently: An old man with a crosier in his left hand appeared to Chosroes, prophesying his victory and identifying himself as Sabaryeshu. Chosroes recounted this to Shirin. However, in this case the event was *not* connected to the campaign against Bahram, but rather with the revolt of Bistam (594/601). Likewise, in the History of the Patriarchs of Mari ibn Sulaiman, the event is related to the campaign against Bistam; clearly this work was based on the Chronicle of Seert. Shirin told him of the miracles of Sabaryeshu, so Chosroes decided to make him catholicos. In any event, Sabaryeshu was also still bishop of Lasum.

From Sabaryeshu's vita, we know that, as bishop, he served several times as a mediator between the king and Maurice, who sent him a *Logothet* with gifts. The East Syriac catholicos Ishoyahb I, who did not accompany Chosroes on his flight, also opposed him upon his return.

He fled to the Arab king Numan III of Hira, who was converted to (East Syriac) Christianity by the monk Sabaryeshu. He remained in Hira, where he died in 596 and was buried by the king's sister in a cloister she founded. The death of the catholicos finally offered the shah the opportunity to involve himself in the fate of the "Church of the East" and influence its future course. In his Christian wife Shirin, he had an advisor who could also look out for her own interests.

For Christianity in Persia itself, the make-up of the shah's court proved exceedingly favorable. On account of good relations with the court of Maurice, Sabaryeshu kept a piece of a cross which was a gift from the emperor and had it placed in a golden cross. Chosroes saw the cross and was fascinated by it. Sabaryeshu then presented the cross to Shirin and the shah. However, he asked the emperor in a letter if he might send him another bit of the cross for himself. When, following the death of Catholicos Ishoyahb I and acting on orders from Chosroes, he called a synod to elect a successor, the shah said to the bishops, according to the Syriac Chronicle, "Send for Sabaryeshu of Lasum and make him your head." And so it came to pass, although the bishops desired a different catholicos, not this strict ascetic, who was at the time already 72 years old. However, the bishops had to yield to the pressure from the king. Chosroes sent for the saint (holy man); the Chronicle of Seert reported that the meeting took place in the palace of Queen Shirin, whose influence forced the decision to elect the ascetic. Following the election, the shah appeared; Sabaryeshu blessed and prayed for him. On the day after the election, the catholicos visited the shah in Shirin's house and administered communion to him.

Catholicos Sabaryeshu and Shirin— the death of Maurice (†602)

The “Nestorian” Sabaryeshu I (596-604)⁴⁷ named catholicos by Chosroes II, was an ascetic and monk, who abhorred worldly pomp. According to legend, a Byzantine bishop, who visited him while adorned in ornate finery, failed to recognize him, as he was clad only in goatskins. In his own defense, he cited Matthew 11:8, in which Jesus criticized those who wore rich clothing. For this reason, after the death of his predecessor, the 72-year-old ascetic was not the favored candidate of the bishops, who put forth a list of five names, none of which was Sabaryeshu’s. Chosroes insisted on Sabaryeshu, and his will prevailed; the catholicos later said of himself that he stood “in ecclesiastical power, upon royal command.” He tried to strike a balance between the wishes of the shah and the interests of his church and concluded his letters with the words, “Pray with us for the fruitful life, the victory and eternal success of our honored, victorious, and merciful lord, Chosroes the shah, that he remain protected in the health of his body, the joy of his soul, the fulfillment of all his desires, according to the will of the Lord God.”⁴⁸ As catholicos, Sabaryeshu enjoyed a prominent position at the shah’s court, and his standing benefited the East Syriac Church as a whole. After the establishment of peace between Emperor Maurice and Chosroes II, he also succeeded in negotiating the exchange of prisoners between Byzantine and Persia. He frequented Shirin’s house in Ctesiphon, where the shah often met with him. The Catholicos was also the queen’s confessor.⁴⁹

47 Das Buch der Synhados oder Synodicon Orientale, ed. by Oscar Braun (1900), ND Amsterdam 1975, 277–282.

48 Ebenda, 296.

49 Chronicle of Seert (1919), 490f, Nr. LXVII.

At that time, the contact between the two empires and the Orthodox state Church on the one side and the East Syriac Church on the other was very good. Maurice sent Bishop Marutha as an ambassador to Chosroes; Chosroes ordered Bishop Milas of Senna to Constantinople.⁵⁰ When tensions developed with Bishop Gregory of Kashkar in Nisibis, Sabaryeshu tried to act as mediator and depose the bishop.⁵¹ When the bishops expressed opposition to this, the shah intervened and ordered the deposition. Unfortunately, the correspondence of Emperor Maurice with Sabaryeshu has been lost. Only one letter from him survives, which he sent in 596 to a group of cloisters in Barquita and which granted the cloisters an exemption. When unrest broke out in Nisibis, which lay on the border with the Byzantine Empire, Chosroes sent the Catholicos to the city to calm the situation.

The influence Shirin exerted over the king played a role in another matter, as well, an account of which has been transmitted by Pseudo-Sebeos. In Susa in Iran, the purported grave of the prophet Daniel can still be seen today. Emperor Maurice asked the shah to give him the prophet's bones. Chosroes issued an order to hand over the relics. However, Shirin expressed great distress over this, and since she was unable to influence the shah's decision, she asked the Christians to pray that the transfer of the bones would be prevented. "The whole populace gathered at that place: with fervent requests and tearful laments they begged Christ to prevent (its departure). They brought mules for it and royal carriage, took (the body) and set off. But when they had gone out through the city gate, suddenly the springs which came up in the middle of the city and flowed outside, dried up. The

50 *Ibd.*, 494–497, Nr. LXVIIIf.

51 *Syriac Chronicle* (1893), 18.

whole populace with sighing and lamentation followed it. It happened that when they had gone a distance of three stades from the city, suddenly the mules attached to the litter stopped, and no one was able to move them from the spot. Abruptly turning back, they forcibly broke right through the crowd and the troops, and ran into the city. When they entered the city gate, the waters of the river were released and flowed, and the springs gushed forth in abundance as before. They rapidly informed the emperor about this. He had offerings brought to it (the corpse) and ordered them to act as it wished. They left it and departed." The shah was told of this, whereupon he relinquished the relics, which remained in the city.⁵²

The Chronicle of Seert also reported that, before the overthrow of Emperor Maurice, Sabaryeshu excommunicated the physician Gabriel of Singar because the latter had married a second wife. The shah requested that the catholicos rescind the excommunication, but Sabaryeshu refused.⁵³ Gabriel converted to the West Syriac Jacobite Church. The Syriac Chronicle reported that he first became a Jacobite, but eventually married two pagan women, in addition to his legitimate wife, and converted back to the West Syriac Church. Clearly Gabriel could permit himself such excesses because he was protected by Shirin, who remained favorably disposed toward him.

Also occurring during the period of Catholicos Sabaryeshu was the baptism of the Arab king Numan III of Hira, whom Sabaryeshu had baptized while he was still bishop of Lasum. Chosroes had not forgiven the king

52 Sebeos (1904), 29; The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos, tr. by R. W. Thomson, Liverpool 1999, Bd. I, 30f (Kap. 14), Bd. II, 175.

53 Chronicle of Seert (1919), 498, Nr. LXIX.

for failing to support him during the campaign against Bahram. Later Numan refused to give Chosroes one of his daughters for his harem. Chosroes eventually had him eliminated; the chronicler Elias of Nisibis dates the murder of the Christian Arab king to the year 601. It is understandable that the Christians' displeasure toward Chosroes increased on account of this event.

The hermit Petros, a contemporary and biographer of Sabaryeshu, reports in his *vita* of the catholicos that Sabaryeshu turned to Shirin regarding the reconstruction of those monasteries which had been destroyed.⁵⁴ Through the mediation of the queen, a monastery was built in Ctesiphon and was named the monastery of Shirin in her honor. The monastery must have been founded around 598. It was initially an East Syriac monastery but was later opened to West Syriac Christians, too. Around 615 Maruta, later bishop of Takrit, came to this monastery in the capital.⁵⁵ The Chronicle of Seert reported that the shah built a great church and a castle in the region of Beith Laspar. Michael Syrus noted that Chosroes built three churches for his wife, which were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Apostles, and the martyr Sergios; the Orthodox Patriarch Anastasius I (559-598) of Antioch (!), who was restored to his office in 593, consecrated these churches.⁵⁶ This is scarcely believable, as the patriarch belonged to the West Syriac Church.⁵⁷ In his "Monastic History," the

54 Petros: *vita* of Mar Sabrisho, in: P. Bedjan: *Histoire de Mar Jabalaha, de trois autres patriarches*, Leipzig-Paris, 2. ed., 1888, 288-331, here 305-307; Martin Tamcke: *Der Katholikos-Patriarch Sabriso I. (596-604) und das Mönchtum*, Frankfurt/Main-Bern-New York 1988, 54.

55 Denha: *Histoire de Maruta*, ed. F. Nau, in: *Patrologia Orientalis* III, Paris 1909, 52-96, here 54 u. 75.

56 *Chronique de Michel le Grand II* (1868), 215.

57 Günter Weiss: *Studia Anastasiana I* (= *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 4), München 1965, 43.

East Syriac monastic historian Thomas of Marga, who wrote in the mid-ninth century, reported that Chosroes built for his wife Shirin a monastery in Belesphar (Gr. Bologesiphora, called Hulwan by the Arabs and Syrians). He sent the Christian Shamta, son of the finance minister Yazdin, to Edessa to collect scriptural texts, prayer books, and lectionaries.⁵⁸ The monastery in question was thus not a monastery in the imperial capital! Persian acts of the martyrs reported that Shirin—who was not, of course, referred to by name—observed the feast of St. Sergius here annually.⁵⁹ This makes clear yet again the queen's special regard for the saint of Sergiopolis (Resafa).

At this time, the theologian Henana was head of the renowned "Nestorian" school of theology at Nisibis. At a synod, Sabaryeshu's predecessor examined the thesis of Henana, who was again estranged from the metropolitan Gregory of Kaskar in Nisibis. The synod of May 596 was to resolve the problems. Sabaryeshu supported the theologian; on the shah's orders, the metropolitan left the city, and 300 of the 800 students left Nisibis. The Syriac Chronicle also mentioned an uprising against Chosroes in the strategically important border city. The shah sent a general with troops and elephants. The Catholicos accompanied the army. When the inhabitants of the city closed the gates, Sabaryeshu persuaded them to surrender. However, the general did not keep his promises regarding the city.⁶⁰ The onset of the disagreements over Gabriel of Singar were reported by the Chronicle before the events of 602, when a

58 Thomas von Marga: *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica*, ed. by E. A. Wallis Budge, London 1893, 80–82.

59 *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*, ed. by Oskar Braun (= *Bibliothek der Kirchenväter*), Kempten–München 1915, 258, § 51.

60 *Syriac Chronicle* (1893), 18f.

revolution broke out in Constantinople, in which Emperor Maurice was overthrown and murdered on November 27, 602, and the officer Phokas took the throne by means of a putsch at the end of November.⁶¹ With the emperor's death, the period of peace came to an end in both great empires, and a 26-year war between these powers followed, beginning with the triumphal march of the Persians and ending with the deaths of Chosroes and Shirin in 628.

The "Easter chronicle," written around 630, told of the murders of Maurice's children and paid special attention to his son Theodosius. The Syriac Chronicle reported that after Maurice's death, his son Theodosius fled to Chosroes, to whom his father had sent him; certain evidence also indicates that the individual whom the king acknowledged as the emperor's son was an advance man. The chronicle recounted Chosroes asking the Catholicos to crown the young man emperor in the Church. The new emperor Phokas had advanced as far as Dara, where Chosroes marched against him. The catholicos was on his side. The Persians would have defeated the Romans and besieged Dara. "Though Chosroes appeared to favor the Christians, for Maurice's sake, he was in reality an enemy of our people," declared the East Syriac chronicle.⁶² While Sabaryeshu remained in Nisibis in the shah's camp over the summer, Chosroes renewed his demand that Gabriel of Singar be absolved. But Sabaryeshu refused. He was already advanced in years, and, after making his will, he died in the summer of 604 while still in the camp.⁶³ The report of the chronicle offers evidence of Shirin's political influence: "Thereafter, under

61 Chronicon Paschale 284–628 (1989), 143.

62 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 17f.

63 Chronicle of Seert (1919), 501–504, Nr. LXXI.

Shirin's influence, her countryman Gregory of Phrat—near Basra, that is, near Khusistan—was made Catholicos, although all the sons of the Church, as well as the shah himself, preferred Gregory of Kaskar, who had been driven out of Nisibis."⁶⁴ This entry indicates that opposition existed within the Church of the East to the monk-Catholicos Sabaryeshu, who had been Shirin's confessor. Collaboration between the Church and the Zoroastrian king had never before been as close as it was during this time. For this reason, the Church in Persia was in danger of suffering the same fate as the Orthodox Church in Byzantium, where the emperor made every decision and had, through his "caeseropapism," turned the Church into a state Church.

Shirin's turn to so-called "Monophysitism"

After Chosroes's return to Seleucia-Ctesiphon following the capture of Dara, the Christians wanted to choose a successor to Sabaryeshu, who had recommended the monk Barhadbesabba to take his place. Chosroes consented to the convening of a synod. In the election of the new Catholicos Sabaryeshu in May 605, Shirin's exertion of influence was not the only decisive factor; she had also "taken in" her own husband Chosroes. The Chronicle of Seert reported that the bishops favored the metropolitan Gregory of Nisibis, who enjoyed high esteem on account of his orthodoxy and whose exile was, in their opinion, unjust.⁶⁵ They sought the approval of the shah. He replied that they ought to elect Metropolitan Gregory, as this was the desire of his wife Shirin. However, the physician Abraham of Nisibis and the other Christians in the shah's

64 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 18f.

65 Chronicle of Seert (1919), 521–524, Nr. LXXX.

circle did not want the metropolitan of Nisibis to become catholicos. Queen Shirin then suggested Gregory of Phrat; the similarity of the two names thus enabled the election of the queen's candidate. The acts of the election synod stated, "On the order his majesty, we elect the holy man of God, distinguished in wisdom and morals, Mar Gregory, the teacher and expositor of Holy Scripture."⁶⁶ In Shirin's view, considering Gregory of Kaskar a faithful representative of the "Church of the East" was out of the question because he had excommunicated her physician Gabriel on charges of bigamy. The fact that her candidate came, as she did, from the southern region of Mesopotamia, probably also played a role in Shirin's choice. When the shah learned of all this and spoke with the physician Abraham, the latter informed him that it was Shirin who had ordered the election.⁶⁷ Chosroes was furious; he eventually accepted the *fait accompli* and forced the new Catholicos to pay 20,000 pounds of silver for the books captured in Dara, to the dismay of the Christians. He then said, Gregory was the catholicos and ought to remain such, but he would never again permit the election of a new Catholicos. When Gregory, who was recognized as corrupt and who used his power for his own enrichment, paying scarce attention to the concerns of the Church, died in 609, Chosroes had his entire fortune confiscated, without resistance from the Christians.⁶⁸ Thereafter Chosroes allowed no new patriarchal elections. In the interim, the abbot Mar Babai the Great was chosen by the bishops as leader of the "Church of the East".⁶⁹

66 Braun: *Synhados* (1900), 299.

67 *Chronicle of Seert* (1919), 522, Nr. LXXX.

68 Samuel Hugh Mofett: *A history of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1, New York 1998, 242.

69 *Chronicle of Seert* (1919), 531f, Nr. LXXXIV.

The Syriac Chronicle reported that the Christian physician Gabriel of Singar bled Shirin, who subsequently bore her son Merdanshah, “whereas she had previously borne no sons.”⁷⁰ Under the influence of her physician Gabriel of Singar, Queen Shirin had clearly embraced the West Syriac (the so-called “Monophysite”) Church, which had its own leader in the Persian Empire, the metropolitan in Takrit in Mesopotamia. The West Syriac Church here consisted primarily of people displaced by the Persian conquests and descendants of these refugees. In this way, it also spread along the Silk Road to Central Asia and, in the course of time, became a threat to the East Syriac Church, which had earlier enjoyed a monopoly in the Persian Empire. Shirin played a substantial role in this paradigm shift; in the period of the vacant see in the “Apostolic Church of the East,” Monophysitism gained additional ground in the Persian Empire. Her influence is also evident in the fact that the Monophysite element advanced in the monastery she had founded in the imperial capital Ctesiphon. There was even talk of the king naming a Monophysite Catholicos for the “Apostolic Church of the East”! The monastery of St. Pethion and the Shirin monastery came under the influence of the Monophysites. The later bishop Maruta of Takrit came from the Jacobite monastery Mar Mattai to the monastery of Shirin, where he introduced long prayers, fasts, meditation, and the study of the Bible.⁷¹

A series of clues indicates that West Syriac Christianity was favored by the Persian Empire beginning in 609. Persian troops conquered the ancient

70 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 13.

71 Denha: Histoire de Maruta (1909), 54 a. 75; cf: Wolfgang Hage: Die syrisch-jakobitische Kirche in frühislamischer Zeit, Wiesbaden 1966, 81f.

Christian metropolis of Edessa. An East Syriac bishop was installed here but was not accepted by the faithful. The later chronicler Michael Syrus reported that an Orthodox bishop, Jonas, was appointed next, until Chosroes ordered that all Chalcedonian bishops be banished from Mesopotamia and Syria.⁷² In his mid-tenth-century world history, the historian Agapius of Hierapolis reported that during the advance of his general Sharbaraz on Constantinople, Chosroes, acting under the influence of a "Jacobite" physician, ordered that Edessa must adopt either this confession or that of the East Syrians. In this way, its population could be separated from Byzantium. A "Jacobite" became bishop of the city.⁷³ The West Syriac Church historian Grigorius Abual-Faradj (Barhebraeus) reported that, following the capture of Edessa, Chosroes first sent an East Syriac bishop there. However, after the people refused to accept him, Chosroes sent John, "one of us," and banished the Chalcedonian bishops from all of Syria.⁷⁴ In 601 the Syrian metropolis of Antioch also fell to the Persians.⁷⁵ Chosroes later ordered the population to be deported to Persia. However, this command remained unfulfilled, as the advance of Emperor Heraclius on Syria brought the matter to an end.

Regarding the so-called "Synod of the Persians," contradictions and lack of clarity plague the source material. We do not know if there were just one or multiple synods. The background may be Chosroes

72 *Chronique de Michel le Grand II* (1868), 218ff.

73 *Christlich-arabische Chrestomathie aus historischen Schriftstellern des Mittelalters*, ed. by Peter Kawerau (= CSCO 385, Subsidia 53), Louvain 1977, 19f.

74 *Gregorii Barhebraei: Chronicon Ecclesiasticum I*, Louvain 1872, 266.

75 Clive Foss: *Syria in Transition A.D. 550–750*, in: *Dumbarton Oak Papers* 51, 1997, 189–269, here 191.

II's desire to create a unified Church in his newly expanded empire, that is, to bring together the Churches of the West Syriac ("Monophysite") tradition in Syria, Iraq, and Armenia with the East Syriac ("Nestorian") Church. Relevant reports are found primarily in Syriac and Armenian literature. It cannot be determined with certainty, however, that they refer to the same synod.

The theological dispute between the East and West Syriac Churches, which developed in 612—or perhaps somewhat later—is attributable to the influence of Shirin and her personal physician Gabriel. Pseudo-Sebeos discussed (1) the synod in connection with the conquest of Alexandria under the Bagratunier Sempad and the chief royal physician.⁷⁶ The goal of the "Synod of the Persians" may have been to unite the Monophysites in Armenia and Persia with the "Church of the East." Clearly Shah Chosroes involved himself (2) in the discussions, declaring that he would appoint no Catholicos as long as the "Apostolic Church of the East" maintained the doctrines of Nestorius.⁷⁷ This indicates that Shirin had definitively removed herself from the church in which she had been raised.

The shah clearly attempted to establish peace among the Christians in his empire and perhaps to unite the Christians into a single Church. The synod, which is generally dated to 612, and its creed appear to comprise,

76 The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos, tr. by R. W. Thomson, Liverpool 1999, lvi (The author believes that the confirmation of the Armenian orthodoxy had nothing to do with the discussion at the Sassanide's court) a. 118 § 151; Sebeos (1904), 116, XXXIII

77 Braun: Synhados (1900), 315, Anm. 2.

with a "Synod of the Persians"⁷⁸, a cluster of themes familiar in Armenian sources, above all in Pseudo-Sebeos, who possibly relied on the genuine Sebeos and conflated several synods into one. Supporting this is the reference to the imprisoned patriarch Zacharias of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was first captured by the Persians in 614. Pseudo-Sebeos added, "the pious Queen Shirin, the courageous Sempad, and the great physician" (i.e. Gabriel of Singar) adopted the same creeds. The "symbolon" (creed), apologies, and refutation of the Orthodox were included in the East Syrian "Synodikon," the collection of ecclesiastical documents. However, the synod—or synods—was held under the leadership of the Armenian Catholicos Abraham I (607-611/15). In his first pastoral letter in 608, Abraham had declared the Chalcedonian Gregory a heretic and expelled him from the Church. In light of their great military success, the Persians were sufficiently powerful to force the Christians to bend to their will. The primary goal of Persian politics may have been to establish religious freedom for the Christians. If Chosroes and Shirin already harbored sympathies for the "Monophysite" Church, it would have been no problem for the Armenians to unite with their sister Church. It was a political rather than a theological decision. The "Orthodox" imperial Church now stood in opposition to the "Persian Church," which represented only a minority in the Sassanian Empire next to the Zoroastrian state Church.

At the aforementioned "Synod of the Persians," the shah declared to be orthodox the creeds of the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople, and Ephesus. In any case, the

78 Ibid, 307, here the author believes that the Synod of 612 is identical with the synod mentioned by Pseudo-Sebeos.

next Armenian patriarch, Komitas (611/15-626), was able to complete the famous Hripsime Church in Eriwan in 617. Xosrovic, the presumed author of Pseudo-Sebeos, may have lived here between 670 and 730.⁷⁹ This undisputed fact indicates that, under Chosroes, the Christians in Armenia could practice their religion without hindrance.

An important source contemporary with the "Synod of the Persians" is the vita of the martyr Giwargis, written by Mar Babai the Great, the abbot from Turabdin. Giwargis was crucified on January 14, 615, after spending seven months imprisoned at the royal court and enduring eight months of torture. Since the one-time Zoroastrian Mar Giwargis participated in the disputation with Gabriel of Singar, this event must have taken place at the beginning of 614 at the latest. It is said that Giwargis translated the creed from Syriac into Persian. Then Patriarch Zacharias, who was taken prisoner in the summer of 614, could not have taken part in the synod.

Mar Babai described the appearance of Gabriel of Singar, whom he considered a "champion of heresy," "the cunning *Schiggarenian*, who falsely calls himself Gabriel."⁸⁰ Gabriel brought charges of slander against Giwargis before the shah. The martyr professed his conversion to Christianity in 596. Barhebraeus portrayed Gabriel as "Orthodox" and as a foe of the "Nestorians".⁸¹ After war broke out with Byzantium, the king's court clearly tended more toward the "Monophysites," who were already well represented in the Persian Empire by deportees and refugees and who had their own center at

79 Charles Renoux: *Language et littérature Arméniennes*, in: *Christianismes orientaux*, Paris 1993, 107–166, here 147.

80 Braun: *Ausgewählte Akten* (1915), 252-260

81 Barhebraeus, Vol. 3, Louvain 1877, 110.

Takrit on the Tigris. The reserve displayed by the "Apostolic Church of the East" toward their erstwhile patroness is clearly evident here. The name of the queen, who was once the protector of the "Church of the East," was no longer mentioned, while the Monophysite Armenians portrayed her as the "pious" queen. In the East Syriac "Book Synhados" it was said that at the conclusion of the synod, the shah had come to no clear decision. In the Syriac Chronicle, however, it was written, "Gabriel and his supporters were defeated and our orthodox believers triumphed."⁸² There is no evidence that the Christian stalemate in the empire of Chosroes II was resolved by a clear decision in his lifetime. Only after his death could the "Apostolic Church of the East" elect a new Catholicos. The loyalties of the historians are easily discerned in the sources; the so-called "Monophysites" portray Gabriel as "our own" and "orthodox," while the "Nestorians" present him as an "accursed heretic." Shirin, who originally belonged to the so-called Nestorians, stood in the last years of her life on the side of the so-called Monophysites; the sources indicate the dissociation of the Church of the East from its former patroness.

Heraclius and the myth of the True Cross

While Emperor Phokas lost one eastern province after another to Shah Chosroes, in the Byzantine Empire, opposition was stirring, embodied above all in Heraclius, who was born c. 575 and was son of the governor of the same name, who governed the Byzantine province of Carthage. When uprisings against Phokas broke out in Egypt, Niketas, Heraclius's nephew, advanced on Egypt

82 Syriac Chronicle (1893), 21.

and was able to seize the capital, Alexandria. In May 610 Heraclius left Carthage with a fleet of ships. He occupied Constantinople after a surprise attack in October and was proclaimed the new emperor after the death of Phokas. He wed his bride Eudokia, who gave birth to the heir to the throne, Constantine, and died soon thereafter. The emperor then married Martina, his sister's daughter, an action most of the Orthodox considered immoral, although the new patriarch, Sergios I (610-638), actively supported the new emperor. Heraclius instituted a series of reforms, which resulted in a consolidation of the empire.

First, however, the Persians succeeded in continuing their advance on Constantinople. Unfortunately, the chronology of the conquests and campaigns is unclear. The contemporary Easter Chronicle dated the fall of Edessa to 609, but Theophanes used 611.⁸³ In 610 the Persian general Sahin occupied Caesarea in Cappadocia. Edessa, Apameia, and Antioch appear to have been captured by the Persians in 611; Theophanes and Michael Syrus dated this to the first year of the new emperor.⁸⁴ Anastasius II (599-609), who was murdered during an uprising, was the last Orthodox patriarch to reside in Antioch. The Jacobite patriarch Athanasius I of Antioch (603-631) was never even able to enter the metropolis. After the conquest of Edessa, Damascus fell into Persian hands, as did Jerusalem in the following year, and finally Egypt in 617/19.

Following his rise to the throne, Heraclius sent word to the shah that he had killed Phokas, who had earlier killed Emperor Maurice. Thus Chosroes could return to

83 Chronicon Paschale 284–628 (1989), 149.

84 Glanville Downey: A History of Antioch in Syria, Princeton 1961, 575.

peaceful relations with Byzantium. The shah, however, ignored the offer of peace. He emphasized that the emperor had taken the throne without his permission;⁸⁵ according to Tabari, he even had the envoys who brought him the letter put to death. The shah's attitude was shaped by his arrogance. He believed that with the alleged imperial son Theodosius he would be able to extort more money from Byzantium. Theophanes Confessor mentioned a second legation sent to Chosroes by the emperor in 612. The date of the conquest of Jerusalem is still in question; based on the accounts of two contemporary sources, the monk Strategios of the monastery of St. Saba and the Easter Chronicle, the city was captured sometime between May 5 and May 20, 614.⁸⁶ The conquest of Jerusalem had a serious consequence: the True Cross fell into Persian hands. The Persians captured the True Cross and carried it to Ctesiphon, where it was presented to Shirin.

Shirin's commitment to the True Cross emerges in a document about the conquest of Jerusalem, which was originally written as a sermon in Greek by the monk Strategios of the monastery of St. Saba in Jerusalem, who was among the prisoners taken to Babylon but who finally succeeded in escaping. He was later conflated with the monk Antiochus from Galatia into a single figure. The document has been preserved in Arabic and, most completely, in Georgian translations; the original Greek text has survived only in fragments. Here it is stated that one of Chosroes's wives, who was a Christian and adherent of the "cursed sect of the Nestorians," greatly honored the True Cross and Patriarch Zacharias. She

85 The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos (1999), 65f, § 113; Sebeos (1904), 65, Nr. XXIV.

86 *Chronicon Paschale* 284–628 (1989), 156.

asked the shah for the cross, as well as for the Patriarch and other prisoners, and she brought everything to her palace. Here the prisoners found a resting place and received great favors. The cross was venerated with the burning of incense and lamps.⁸⁷ The reliable report was translated in the tenth century from Arabic into Georgian. The name of the queen appears to have been forgotten by that time. In another Arabic version, it was stated that the Patriarch Modestus of Jerusalem finally determined that the relic of the cross was authentic because the seal of its covering had never been broken; this was attributed both to God and to the piety of the queen. An Arabic version also referred to the shah's Nestorian maiden. Although Shirin's name was not specifically mentioned, it is clear from the context that it was Shirin.⁸⁸

At the beginning of the tenth century, Eutychios, the Melkite Patriarch of Alexandria (†940), wrote about Chosroes's war with Byzantium and the destruction of Jerusalem that Chosroes found aid in Byzantium during the revolt of Bahram Cobin. After achieving victory, he sent the army back to the emperor. "He wrote to Emperor

87 La Prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614, tr. D. Gérard Garitte (= CSCO 203, Scr. Iberici 12), Louvain 1960, 45, Nr. XX, 4f; cf. Karl-Heinz Uthemann: Zacharias von Jerusalem, in: BBKL 14, 1998, 299–302.

88 Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614. Recensiones Arabicae I. A et B, ed. G. Garitte (= CSCO 341), Louvain 1953, 31, XX,4: „Accepit eum una ex ancillis regis; et accepit palum crucis, nam erat christiana nomine (erat enim nestoriana).“ cf. Expugnationis Hierosolymae A.D. 614. Recensiones Arabicae II: C et V, ed. G. -Garitte (= CSCO 348), Louvain 1974, 95, XX,4: „Quia rex Perse habebat concubinam Nestorianam.“ cf. Elisabeth Campagner: Eine jüdische Apokalypse des 7. Jahrhunderts? Kaiser Heraklius als Antichrist?, in: Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften 5, 2002, 1–43, *ibid* 5.

Maurice and asked him for the hand of his daughter Mary. Emperor Maurice replied, 'You see, I am not allowed to give you my daughter as a wife, unless you become a Christian.'⁸⁹ And so Chosroes had himself baptized.⁹⁰ The Melkite author was aware that the Byzantine emperor would never have given a non-Christian his daughter as a wife. Thus he invented the story of Chosroes's baptism. On the occasion of the conquest of Jerusalem, according to Eutychios, the Persians took to Persia the piece of the True Cross that Helena had left in Jerusalem. "Mary, daughter of Emperor Maurice, asked Chosroes for the wood from the cross, the Patriarch Zacharias, and many of those who had been imprisoned. She took them to her palace, and they remained with her."⁹¹ In reality, behind this statement may lie actions of Shirin, who lived in a palace as queen and certainly exerted political influence. It seems that Shirin took the cross that passed from the imperial Church into the possession of the Oriental Christians. After the conquest, Chosroes installed Bishop Modestus in Jerusalem, and he began the rebuilding of the city and established contact with the Catholicos of Armenia

The chronology of the Persian military campaigns during the time of Heraclius is disputed, as the chief sources—the "Chronicon Paschale," Pseudo-Sebeos, and Theophanes—frequently contradict one another. The most reliable source in the *Easter Chronicle*, which dates back to the period of Heraclius. Evidently confusion in the chronology arose at the end of the *Easter Chronicle*

89 Franz Altheim: *Eutychios Annalen*, in: *Geschichte der Hunnen*, Bd. 5, Berlin 1962, 126–147, here 136.

90 *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien* (1985), 99, Nr. 268.

91 Altheim (1962), 140.

on account of the transposition of a few pages of its earliest manuscript.⁹² With regard to Theophanes's account, it is possible that the work appearing under his name was copied from a dossier, and the transcriber was unable to place the individual fragments in their proper order.⁹³ The chronology of the field campaigns of Heraclius cannot be settled here. It seems, however, that the contemporary Easter Chronicle offers a more reliable record of the dates than does the world chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, written or edited almost two hundred years later.

According to the contemporary *Chronicon Paschale*, Sahin's siege of Constantinople took place in 615⁹⁴; Theophanes recorded two sieges, in the years 607/08 and 614/15⁹⁵! Pseudo-Sebeos dated the siege to the twentieth year of Chosroes's reign (609/10). Other authors assign the siege of Constantinople under General Shahrbaraz to the year 626! There is, however, no reason to doubt the date of Sahin's siege (615) found in the nearly contemporary Easter Chronicle. Other authors placed the siege of Constantinople by the Persian general Shahrbaraz in the year 626! In 614/15 the advance of the Persian general finally succeeded in reaching Chalcedon on the Bosphorus; Pseudo-Sebeos credited Shahrbaraz⁹⁶, the "boar of the empire," with being the general who reached

92 Holger A. Klein: Niketas und das wahre Kreuz. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Überlieferung des *Chronicon Paschale* ad annum 614, in: BZ 94, 2001, 580–587.

93 Oliver Schmitt: Untersuchungen zur Organisation und zur militärischen Stärke oströmischer Herrschaft im vorderen Orient zwischen 628 und 633, in: BZ 94, 2001, 197–229, *ibid.* 198f, Ann. 9.

94 *Chronicon Paschale* 284–628 (1989), 156 u. 159.

95 Theophanes (1997), 425 u. 432.

96 *Prosopography* 3 (1992), 1141ff.

the Bosphorus. According to the *Chronicon Paschale*, on this occasion, a face-to-face discussion took place between the emperor and the Persian general.⁹⁷ This meeting, of which Theophanes was unaware, was also mentioned in an additional imperial legation sent to the shah. According to the *Easter Chronicle*, Heraclius expressed to Sahin the hope that the two empires might coexist side-by-side. The formulation of the letter to the shah indicates that it came from the senate without input from the emperor. It recalled the earlier good relations between Persia and Byzantium. In Chalcedon Sahin claimed he lacked the authority to establish peace. Pseudo-Sebeos reported that the Persians accepted gifts and then returned home to their winter quarters. The *Easter Chronicle*, however, claimed that Sahin traveled through Anatolia with the Byzantine envoys and took them to Chosroes, who threw them in prison, where they died. It is clear that Sahin had to return quickly since the Byzantine general Philippikos was threatening to block the route. The chronology of events, however, remains uncertain; other sources dated them later.⁹⁸

The loss of the Middle East represented a catastrophe for the Byzantine Empire. In 614, after the conquest of Edessa, Damascus, and Jerusalem, the shah reached the zenith of his power. After the loss of such vital regions as Palestine and Egypt, Heraclius initially had to adopt a defensive position, primarily because the Avars penetrated into Thrace in 617 and threatened the imperial capital. In any case, Heraclius must have realized that

97 *Chronicon Paschale* (1989), 159.

98 Dölger: *Regesten I* (1976), 18, Nr. 166; cf. Andreas Stratos: *Byzantium in the seventh Century*, Bd. 1: 602–634, Amsterdam 1968, 115; dated 614, but look: *The Cambridge History of Iran 3* (1983), 168.

the provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were lost for the time being. These were precisely those regions in which the "Monophysite" and "Nestorian" Christians were suppressed by imperial authorities. By means of the "Synod of the Persians," these "non-Chalcedonian" Christians came to terms with a new regime, which involved itself much less than Byzantium in the internal affairs of the Church. Heraclius used the time for reform and rearmament. Theologically he tried to find a compromise acceptable to both the Orthodox and the "Monophysites." Not until Easter of 622 could the emperor begin a counterattack. When Chosroes learned that Heraclius was on the march, he handed over command to Sharbaraz, the "boar of the empire," his best field officer. Using the element of surprise, Heraclius advanced over the Taurus Mountains into Armenia. Before a single battle was fought, he controlled all of Asia Minor as far as the upper Euphrates. He maintained the position in the Taurus Mountains but had to return to Constantinople in the winter because the Avars and Slavs had taken advantage of the emperor's absence by breaking the peace and invading Thrakien. The first campaign of 622 was only a preliminary skirmish; Heraclius left Constantinople by ship and continued eastward over land. The attack of the Avars caused him to retreat.⁹⁹ The dates of the emperor's campaigns are disputed; Thiess distinguishes a total of five campaigns from 622 to the spring of 628.¹⁰⁰ Most scholars accept only three campaigns, the first of which is mentioned only by the contemporary poet Georgios Pisides and by Theophanes.

99 Thiess (1959), 456–492.

100 Ernst Gerland: Die persischen Feldzüge des Kaisers Herakleios, in: BZ 3, 1894, 330–373, here 340–348.

Christians in the Byzantine regions conquered by the Persians were compelled to adapt to a new situation. The Byzantine emperor always supported the Orthodox state Church and the "Melkites" outside the imperial borders; the Syriac Churches were at best tolerated. An East or West Syriac Christian could expect from the Persians a certain degree of toleration, which Byzantium as a rule refused to grant. As early as the third century, the East Syriac Church had been working out arrangements with the shah.

The West Syriac Christians also practiced a policy of seesawing back and forth between Byzantium and Ctesiphon. The Melkite (Orthodox) Arab historian Agapius of Hierapolis reported for the year 624 a campaign of the Persian general Sharbaraz (Shrajar) against Constantinople and noted that Shah Chosroes compelled the Melkite inhabitants of Edessa to convert to the Jacobite Church. The population then became Jacobite and elevated a certain Isaiah to bishop. In the end the shah ordered the deportation of the Christians to Persia; however, due to the Byzantine military advance, the action was not carried out. The events surrounding the temporary Persian occupation of the cities of Edessa, Nisibis, Antioch, and Alexandria cannot be placed in a precise chronology. In any case, the so-called "Monophysites," like the "Apostolic Church of the East," were distanced from the shah; after the death of the court physician Gabriel, they lost their influence. This became particularly evident following the conquest of Byzantine territories when the "Monophysite" patriarch Athanasius I Gamala (594-631) sent Bishop Kyriakos, who had been driven out of Amida by the Byzantines, as visitor to the newly won Persian regions. Bishop Samuel, head of the "Monophysites" in the Persian Empire, occupied the bishopric of Amida. Bishop Kyriakos subsequently

initiated proceedings against Metropolitan Samuel before the patriarch. The patriarch, however, could take no action against Chosroes's favorites.¹⁰¹

The "Monophysites" in Syria, Armenia, and Egypt were well-disposed toward each other. In 616 union was concluded between the West Syriac and Coptic Churches. After the overthrow of Chosroes, Emperor Heraclius forced the East Syriac bishop Isaiah out of Edessa. In Hierapolis a meeting took place between the emperor and the West Syriac patriarch Athanasius; however, they reached no settlement because the emperor wanted to enforce recognition of the Council of Chalcedon. The later chronicler Barhebraeus noted that God had, by means of the Arabs, freed "what is ours" from the hands of the Greeks.¹⁰² The alienation of the Persian court from the West Syriac Christians, as well, can be seen in the fact that after the death of Samuel (†623/24), the see of the metropolitan of the West Syriac Church in the Persian Empire remained unoccupied. Only after the overthrow of Chosroes did Bishop Marutha assume this function. Consequently, diplomatic relations were re-established between the Persian government and the West Syriac Church and its patriarch Athanasius I. The death on January 22, 628, of the martyr Anastasius the Persian, who was executed by Chosroes, as well as the executions of other Christians, indicates that, at the end of the shah's reign, the Christians stood in opposition to Chosroes, whose downfall they welcomed.

The second and third campaigns of Heraclius were described by the *Easter Chronicle*, *Pseudo-Sebeos*, and

101 Michel le Syrien: *Chronique* 2 (1901), 379f.

102 Gregorii Barhebraei *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* 1 (1872), 274: „Quapropter Deus ultionum per Ismaelitas e manibus Graecorum nos liberavit.“

Theophanes. Pseudo-Sebeos reported that, before leaving, the emperor received a letter from Chosroes, in which he referred to the Persian conquests and asked for surrender. Prior to departing, the emperor had Patriarch Sergius read the letter before the altar, and then he headed off to the east.¹⁰³ The emperor's departure took place on March 25, 624, and he journeyed from Nicomedia through Caesarea and Armenia on the old Persian frontier. He would not see the imperial capital again until after Chosroes's death. His son Constantine, born in 612, was made his representative. Following his departure, Heraclius celebrated Easter in Nicomedia with his second wife Martina; she also accompanied him on his campaign to the east. The heir Heraklonas was born in 626 in the region of the Lazikes in present day Georgia. The emperor assembled his army in Caesarea in Cappadocia for a great retaliation. Thus did the tide of the Persian War turn in favor of Byzantium.

Proceeding with a fast march, the emperor appears to have advanced in mere weeks as far as Gantzag in present day Azerbaijan, which he reached in June 624. Dvin, the capital of Persian Armenia, was besieged and finally conquered. It was reported that Heraclius offered a settlement to Chosroes for the last time, but Chosroes rejected it. Sharbaraz, who was to lead an invasion of the Byzantine territory, clearly commanded Sahin to observe the movements of the emperor. Chosroes, who since 590 had proved to be a less than successful field commander, was surprised at the speed of the emperor's advance and fled Gantzag for Mesopotamia. Pseudo-Sebeos described the events in the Armenian region in greater detail. The generals Sharbaraz and Sahin closed in on Heraclius. The

103 Chronicon Paschale (1989), 166f; cf Gerland (1894), 349f; Stratos (1968), 154f.

emperor wintered in "Albania," in the northern Caucasus on the Caspian Sea. The battles in the Caucasus region dragged on until the spring of 626, when the emperor decided to halt his campaign on account of events in Constantinople, which had been besieged by the khan of the Avars and the Persians. He proceeded from Lake Van to the Tigris and reached Martyropolis and Amida, where he paused to rest and wrote a letter to Constantinople.

Over the course of the year 625, Chosroes mobilized an army against Byzantium. Heraclius remained in the east; he negotiated an alliance with the khan of the Chasars. The available sources offer no clear picture of the details of his stay in the Caucasus until autumn 627. The emperor faced a difficult decision: if he stayed in the east, Constantinople was in danger of conquest. On the other hand, from his position in the Caucasus, he was better able to hold the Persians in check. Defense of the capital city of the Avars and Persians lay in the hands of Patriarch Sergius. The khan reached the walls of the city at the end of July 626. He concluded a treaty for military cooperation against Byzantium with the Persians, who had marched under Sahin's command for over 1200 kilometers. In August 626 the defenders prevented the attempt to unite the two armies; the siege had to be abandoned. After the end of the siege, Sergius had performed the Akathistos hymn to the Mother of God (Theotokos), which remains to this day an important part of the Orthodox liturgy and which is sung while standing.

When Heraclius advanced into the ancient Persian territories, Chosroes imposed new taxes and had the Orthodox Churches plundered. The Christians in Persian were required to adhere to the "Monophysite" sect. In March 626 the emperor launched his attack. In September

627 he departed from Tiflis for the south with the Chasars and Lazics aid contingents; in February 628, after traveling more than 1000 kilometers, he reached the Nahrawan-channel 12 miles outside of the capital city of Ctesiphon. This advance led to the collapse of Chosroes's reign. The Persian commander Razates tried to block the advance before the emperor crossed the Armenian mountain chain. Years of war left the Persian Empire exhausted and bled dry; its collapse was imminent. But Byzantium was also spent; the wars of attrition of the two powers made way for the rapid advances of the Arabs under the first caliphs.

The End of Chosroes and Shirin (628)

At the beginning of December, 627, the Byzantine army crossed the River Zab in today's northern Iraq and entered Mesopotamia. The Turkish troops that aided them left before the great battle at Niniveh on December 12, 628, in which Heraclius defeated the Persians, who lost their commander, Razates. The Persian commander Sharbaraz, however, stood to the west of the Byzantine army, presenting the danger that they might be cut off from their supply lines. The emperor celebrated Christmas with the East Syriac Christian Yazdin, Chosroes's minister of finance.

In early 628, Heraclius plundered a few of the shah's castles, placing immeasurable spoils in the hands of the Byzantines. On January 6, 628, the emperor celebrated the Feast of Epiphany with the Christians. He returned to his residence in Dastagerd, however, without personally encountering Chosroes. The emperor's letter from Gantzag to Constantinople of March 15, 628, recounted the progress of the war from October 17, 627¹⁰⁴.

104 Chronicon Paschale (1989), 182–188.

The emperor reported that on February 24 he began the retreat over the chain of mountains between Assyria and Media. After a long and severe snowstorm he arrived in Barza in Azerbaijan, where he met up with the Persian commander Aspadh-Gusnap, who told him that Chosroes had in the meantime been overthrown by his son Siroe. On March 11 he arrived in Gantzag; from here he reported the news of Chosroes's death to his subjects. On March 24 two prisoners were brought to negotiate an armistice under Siroe's orders. The following day the emperor sent a general to the new shah. A messenger arrived from Siroe on April 4 with word of his willingness to make peace. The emperor was satisfied and gave his ambassadors instructions for the peace negotiations. On April 8 he set out from Gantzag for Constantinople, where he celebrated his victory and the end of the war. He decided against besieging the Persian capital and engaging in the difficult street fighting necessary to occupy it.

Between the capture of the cross (614) and the final campaign of Heraclius, the sources tell us nothing about Shirin. Women did not play leading roles during times of war. With regard to the plundering of the royal palaces, Theophanes mentioned that 24 years earlier, during his battle against Phokas, Chosroes had received a prophecy that he would perish when he entered the residence at Ctesiphon. For this reason, he had always avoided it. He was now fleeing to Ctesiphon in order to protect his treasures and his wife "Seirem," as well as three other women, who were his daughters. He was afflicted with diarrhea and wanted to name Merdانشah, Shirin's son, as his successor.¹⁰⁵ He crossed the river with Shirin, Merdانشah, and her other son "Saliar"

105 Theophanes (1997), 452f.

(=Shahriyar), to bring them to safety. For Kavad, this was a signal of the conspiracy against the father. On Heraclius's orders, Kavad then freed all the imprisoned "Romans" and killed Merdanshah and all the other children before their father's eyes.¹⁰⁶ Tabari reported that seventeen or eighteen of the shah's sons were murdered in front of their father. He then commanded all his father's enemies to torture him and four days later had him killed. In his letter of March 15, Heraclius referred to the coronation of Kavad II on February 24 and the murder of Chosroes on February 28, 628. The Christians Shamta and Nehormizd, sons of the finance minister Yazdin—whom Chosroes had murdered—participated in Chosroes's murder; Nehormizd had freed Kavad from prison.¹⁰⁷ Thomas of Marga recounted Shamta's role in the plot; the new shah Kavad ordered the "Apostolic Church of the East" to choose a new catholicos.¹⁰⁸ After the abdication of Babai the Great, the bishops elected Ishoyahb II of Gedala (628-646), who sent a legation to the emperor.

When Heraclius returned to Constantinople is uncertain. He traveled from Armenia to Amida, where he had a church erected. In Caesarea he bequeathed the bishop's church with a relic of a cross. In July of 629 he met Sharbaraz in Arabissos in Cappadocia. In Edessa he returned a church held by the so-called "Nestorians" to the Orthodox. Provisional peace was established with Kavad in the summer of 628. Kavad evidently promised to return the cross and establish final peace with Byzantium, thus ending the wars of the East. It is possible,

106 Tabari (1973), 382f.

107 Labourt Jerome: *Le Christianisme dans l'Empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide (224–632)*, Paris 1901, 234f.

108 Thomas von Marga (1893), 11f.

however, that a final peace treaty between Byzantium and Persia was only concluded under Queen Boran. Kavad II declared himself prepared to evacuate all occupied territories. His letter to Heraclius, whom he called "brother," is preserved in the *Easter Chronicle*. The emperor was prepared to agree to a peace settlement which reestablished the borders of 591.

Kavad died in September 628 and was succeeded by his son Ardashir II, still a minor, who was overthrown by Sharbaraz in late March or April of 630. Sharbaraz ruled as shah for five weeks. Queen Boran, a daughter of Chosroes II, took over the throne in the summer of 630. The *Chronicle of Seert* reported that it was said that Shirin poisoned Kavad, since he had killed her son Merdanschah.¹⁰⁹ This presumes, of course, that Shirin was still alive in September 628. According to the "*Shah Namah*," she committed suicide at the grave of Chosroes II, so that she would not have to marry Siroe-Kavad. The Arab historian al-Yakubi (†897) reported that Kavad married his father's wives. Gahiz and Firdausi later adopted this tradition.

A political turning point in "East Roman" history took place in 629 when the victorious Heraclius adopted the Greek title "Basileus autokrator" rather than the Roman "Imperator." From this point on, one can finally speak of "Byzantine" history, in which the Greek element takes precedence over the Roman. According to popular tradition, the cross taken from Jerusalem by the Persians was returned to Jerusalem by Heraclius on March 21, 630 or during Holy Week of 631.¹¹⁰ The actual date of the return of the cross is debated. Heraclius demanded its

109 *Chronicle of Seert* (1919), 555, Nr. XCIII.

110 Schmitt (2001), 197–229, here 203f.

return, and Kavad replied that he would give it back when he found it. It appears that Sharbaraz sent the coveted relic back to the emperor in late February 630, at the latest, after receiving it from the imperial general David in Edessa. The monk Strategios, an eyewitness, reported that Heraclius and his second wife Martina secured its triumphal return to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (Church of the grave).¹¹¹ Whether this event took place on March 21, 630, or a year later cannot be conclusively determined.¹¹² It is improbable, however, that the triumphant entry into Constantinople of the emperor with the cross took place as early as September 14, 628—the day which has since then been celebrated as the feast of the elevation of the cross.¹¹³ The feast of the elevation of the cross was already being celebrated prior to 628; it was mentioned in pilgrims' accounts in the fourth century! At times contradictory sources allow for no definitive conclusions regarding this matter.

After his defeat of the Persians, the emperor stayed in the east, largely because the Persian general Sharbaraz remained in imperial territory. In Jerusalem Heraclius received a delegate from the new East Syriac catholicos Ishoyahb, with whom he met in Aleppo shortly thereafter. In the cathedral of Mren in Armenia, a relief dating from

111 La prise de Jerusalem (1960), 54f, Nr. XXIV, 8f.

112 Stratos I (1968), 254: 21. 3. 630. He cited Strategios, but he gives no date. Cf. Encyclopedia Judaica IX, 1407f: 21. 3. 629; Hans A. Pohlsander similar the - bevor Thierry and Héraclius, in: BBKL 19, 2001, 654–671: 630 oder 631; N. -Thierry: -Héraclius et la vraie Croix, in: From Byzantium to Iran. Armenian Studies in -Honour of Nina G. Garsoian (= Columbia University Program in Armenian -Studies 5), Atlanta 1997, 165–186, here 167: 21. 3. 630.

113 The story of the alleged transfer of the holy cross on the 14th September 628 to Constantiople is to read still at John Julius Norwich: Byzanz. Der Aufstieg des oströmischen Reiches, Düsseldorf–München 1998, 358f!

a short time later paid homage to the emperor. According to the account of Theophanes, the cross remained in Jerusalem until between 633 and 635 when, because of the Arab threat to Jerusalem, Heraclius brought it to Constantinople.

Unfortunately, contemporary sources tell us nothing of Shirin's fate. The earliest collection of materials goes back to the writer Thaalibi (691). In 891 the Arab geographer Yakubi referred to the ruins of the castle Kasr-i Shirin in Persian Kurdistan, which had served as Chosroes's residence.¹¹⁴ The geographers Yakut and al-Quazwini also referred to the story of the palace's origins in their works. A significant source of materials relating to Shirin from c. 900 is the historical work of at-Tabari, preserved in Arabic and Persian versions. The historical writings of Tabari were translated into Persian and disseminated by Abu Ali Muhammad al-Balami (†974). Here appears for the first time the story of Shirin's love for the carpenter Ferhad, whom Chosroes banished to Bisutun.¹¹⁵ The builder fell in love with the concubine Shirin and was therefore punished by Chosroes and had to break through a rock.¹¹⁶

Also important is the Persian national epic, the "Shah Namah," completed sometime after the year 1000; presumably it was based on the Book of Kings, which dated from the time of Chosroes II and whose existence is attested to by Arab writers, as well. In the Orient it was often the case that the son took over his father's harem;

114 M. Streck – L. Lassner: Kasr-i Shirin, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 4, Leiden 1990, 730f.

115 Ananiasz Zajaczkowski: Farhad wa-Shirin, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, Leiden 1991, 793–795.

116 Heshmat Moayyad: Farhad, in: *Encyclopedia Iranica* 11, London–New York 2001, 257f.

such a relationship did not occur with his own mother, naturally, but only with the shah's other wives. Tabari mentioned that before Chosroes's murder, his son subjected the shah to a kind of interrogation. During the questioning, Chosroes explained that he had received a prophecy that one of his sons would murder him. He had this prophecy in writing, as well as the letter of an Indian king, who had written to Kavād that in the 38th year of Chosroes's reign, he would "protect our wife Shirin; she is still alive and healthy in body and spirit: if you would like to get the interpretation of the horoscope and the letter from her,...you may do so."¹¹⁷

Tabari also reported another event involving Shirin. On account of the predictions and prophecies about his overthrow, Chosroes forbade his sons to have contact with women. Shirin adopted his son Shariyar as her own. When he could no longer bear his life without women, Shirin permitted him to meet a girl from her household. This union produced Yesdegerd (III), the last shah of the Persian Empire. For five years Shirin kept the boy's birth a secret from her husband. When she finally presented him to the shah, Chosroes wanted to have his grandson murdered "but Shirin clung to him and made him swear by God not to murder him by telling him: It is a matter which is already decided for the kingship and so it cannot be changed".¹¹⁸ In this way Shirin saved Yesdegerd's life.

The "Shah Namah" reported that Kavād II was in love with Shirin. This seems somewhat improbable, as Shirin had to have been at least fifty years old by then since she had accompanied Chosroes as his wife on his flight to Byzantium in 590. Thus this may have been a purely

117 Tabari (1973), 372.

118 Ibid, 360.

political act. Since no other source tells of Shirin's death, we cannot confirm the events Firdausi reported. Here it is also claimed that Shirin had Mary—who is referred to as the daughter of Emperor Maurice—poisoned.¹¹⁹ The theme of murder out of envy thus appears for the first time almost 400 years after Shirin's death. Contemporary sources say nothing of this. The *vita* of Catholicos Ishoyahb II (628-646) stated that in his day Ardashir succeeded his father Siroe (Kavad II). The rumor spread that Siroe was murdered by Shirin with poison because he had killed her son Merdanshah.¹²⁰ This account—transmitted also in the *Chronicle of Seert*—does not agree with the report found in the *Shah Namah* that during Siroe's lifetime Shirin committed suicide on the grave of her husband. In any case, Shirin seems to have been rather quickly portrayed as a poisoner; one can see in such accounts that the sympathies of the "Nestorians" toward their fellow believer had cooled significantly. Regarding Shirin's death, we must simply rely on Firdausi's account, which must of course be taken with a grain of salt. How quickly the story became muddled in the Muslim sources is indicated even by the important author at-Tabari; the votive offerings of Chosroes to St. Sergios were wrongly described in such a way that the saint became the Byzantine general Chosroes supported against Bahram Cobin!

Regarding Shirin's final days, the "Shah Namah" reported that she visited her husband in prison daily for a month.¹²¹ Following Chosroes's murder by Mir

119 The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, vol. 8 (1923), 389f, § 58.

120 Josephus Assemani: *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*, Bd. 3/1: *De Scriptis Nestorianis*, Roma 1725, 96: „Ferunt, Shiroem a Sirina veneno sublato, quod filium eius Mardansaam interemisset.“

121 The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, ed. by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, vol. 9, London 1925, 28f, § 3.

Hormizd and the murders of his fifteen sons—including Merdanschah—she lived for another 53 days and prepared poison for a possible suicide attempt.¹²² After two months of mourning, Kavad desired to take her as a wife. Shirin replied that she had been queen for many years. As the qualities of a good wife, she emphasized modesty, the bearing of sons, and beauty, and she listed her four sons: Nastur, Shariyar, Farud, and Merdanschah. When the shah pressured her, she expressed the wish to visit Chosroes's grave one more time. Kavad agreed. Shirin went to her husband's grave and committed suicide. The date of Shirin's death fell in the autumn of 628!

Kavad II died in September 628. The Armenian historian Moses of Kalankatukh portrayed him as a patricide. One can detect here the hatred of the Armenian Christians, who welcomed Heraclius as a liberator. Kavad's seven-year-old son Ardaschir II served as the nominal ruler until April of 630 and was succeeded by Sharbaraz, who was murdered in June of 630. He was followed by Boran, Chosroes II's daughter, who ruled until autumn of 631; in 632 Yesdegerd III, son of Shariyar and the final ruler of the Sassanian dynasty, assumed the throne, which he lost to the Arabs after twenty years.

The birth of the legend

In the European tradition, Chosroes appeared only in connection with the legend of Heraclius. With the feast of the "Exaltati Sanctio Crucis" (September 14), the liturgy created the impression that Heraclius had become the archetype of the Christian rule. "In him was embodied

¹²² Ibid, 36f, § 6.

once again the successful opposition to the expansion of the Persian Empire to the west; and what elevated him above the pagan Alexander was the liberation of the Holy Land and Egypt from the power of the Persian shah Chosroes and the claiming as spoils of war of the holiest relic of Christianity."¹²³ Otto of Freising and Wilhelm of Tyrus emphasized the importance of Heraclius and his role in European history. Between 1143 and 1146 Otto wrote in his world chronicle that, in the twelfth year of his reign, Heraclius undertook a campaign against the Persians. "After the emperor had killed the son of Chosroes in a duel on the Danube bridge, he ravaged Persia, tore the True Cross away from the unholy hand of Chosroes, and killed him; fully seven years after his departure, he returned triumphant to the imperial capital, and soon thereafter he had the redeeming wood returned to Jerusalem. Since that time, the feast of the elevation of the True Cross is celebrated in the Church of God."¹²⁴ Romantic tales also characterized the emperor as an infallible expert on women, horses, and precious stones. Gautiers of Arras's "Roman d'Eracle" from the second half of the 12th century was imitated in German literature. Beginning with the "Kaiserchronik" (pre-1139), Heraclius has also had a role in German literature.

With the "Kaiserchronik"—e.g. in the text of the younger "Kaiserchronik"—the "Eraclius" of the Hessian scholar Otte, which was also included in the world chronicle of Heinrich of Munich, was transmitted in manuscripts. Around 1204 Otte incorporated the winning

123 Herbert Kolb: Kreuzzugsliteratur – Das Wunderbare und die Reichtümer des Ostens, in: Propyläen Geschichte der Literatur 2: 600–1400, Berlin 1988, 483–503, here 490.

124 Otto Bischof von Freising: Chronik oder die Geschichte der zwei Staaten, ed. by Walther Lammers, 5. ed., Darmstadt 1990, 395.

back of the cross that had been stolen by the Persian shah Cosdras into his dualistic worldview. "Cosdras is the type of the arrogant tyrant of the martyr legends, and Cosdras's son, seen as chivalrous, does not stand in the light of an ideal of both pagan and Christian; he also fights and falls as a champion of the kingdom of the devil that he had been ordered to spread throughout the world and establish at the center of Christianity in Rome and Laterane."¹²⁵ Under Cosdras, the heathen aggressors threatened the continued existence of the Christian empire and advanced as far as the Danube before being defeated by Heraclius. Around 1240/50, the Heraclius cycle was depicted in the Braunschweig Cathedral; it portrayed the beheading of Chosroes after his defeat by Heraclius.¹²⁶ In a c. 1330/40 fresco of the battle with the Persians from a Heraclius cycle of Frauenrombach near Fulda, Chosroes is shown on the throne while his execution is being carried out. In Santa Croce in Florence, a fresco of Agnolo Gaddi depicts the Persian shah in an elaborate throne room. Chosroes, bleeding, kneels on the floor, as his head is caught in a piece of cloth. A similar image, with the rolling head of Chosroes, is found in S. Francesco in Volterra. In Stift Klosterneuburg Heraclius also appears in a stained glass window, portrayed as the Christian ruler par excellence.

James of Voragine (†1298), author of the traditional "Legenda aurea (1260/67), offered with the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross two versions of Chosroes's demise. First he recounted the conclusion of the battle with

125 Helmut de Boor: *Die höfische Literatur 1170–1250* (= *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* 2), 10. ed., München 1979, 54.

126 Marcel Restle: *Konstantins- und Herakleiosbilder in Ost und West*, in: *Geschichte und Kultur der Paläologenzeit*, ed. by Werner Seibt, Wien 1996, 200–204.

Heraclius: "And all the people of Cosdras accepted the Christian faith and received holy baptism. Cosdras himself, however, knew nothing of the end of the fighting; since everyone hated him, no one wanted to tell him. So Eraclius came to him and found him seated on a golden throne. Eraclius said, 'Because you have honored in your own way the wood from the True Cross, I will let you live, so that you might receive baptism and believe in Christ; you shall also have your kingdom back for worldly hostages. But if you do not do this, I will kill you with my sword and cut off your head.' Cosdras did not agree to this, so Eraclius took up his sword and cut off his head. He then had him buried because he was a king. But he had Cosdras's ten-year-old son, who was also present, baptized and sponsored him himself; he handed over to the boy his father's kingdom."¹²⁷ Here Chosroes's death was reinterpreted in terms of Christian ideology; no mention is made of Shirin. However, Jakob also provided a second version: "In the chronicles, this story is told differently. There it is said that Cosdras conquered every kingdom and also captured Jerusalem, along with Patriarch Zacharias and the wood from the True Cross. And when Eraclius wanted to make peace with him, Cosdras swore that he would not make peace with the Romans until they renounced belief in the crucified one and worshiped the sun. Eraclius became angry and advanced against him, defeating the Persians in many battles and forcing Cosdras to flee to Ctesiphon. In the end, Cosdras became ill with dysentery and wanted to crown his son Merdانشah as shah. When Syrios, the shah's oldest son, learned of this, he formed an alliance

127 Die Legenda aurea des Jacobus von Voragine, translated from Latin by Richard Benz (1955), Darmstadt 1997, 699f.

with Eraclius, pursued his father with the nobles, captured him, and gave him the bread of fear to eat and the water of sorrow to drink; finally, he had him shot to death with arrows."¹²⁸ In the Christian tradition, Heraclius the brilliant victor lived on—his failures against Islam in the final years of his life were omitted entirely. In the 15th century the Italian humanist Flavio Biondo wrote between 1439 and 1452 his "Historiarum Decades" III; here he told the story of Heraclius and the death of Chosroes; he mentioned his son Merdanschah, but not his mother Shirin; Enea Silvio Piccolomi followed 1461 this representation in his "Asia"; Shirin he didn't know. We find the motive of Chosroes' death and the victory of Heraclius at the end of the middle age in Flavio Biondo's "Historiarum Romanorum Decades" (1439-1452), Enea Silvio Piccolomini's "Asia" (1461) and Hartmann Schedel's "Liber Chronicarum" (1493).

At the same time Heraclius was becoming the archetype of the victorious crusader in the Christian world, the myth of Shirin, archetype of pure love, was developing in the Muslim world—and Shirin's Christian background was being consigned to oblivion. "Kisra Abarwiz," however, continued to be seen into the Abassid period in the Islamic realm as the prototype of the unjust king—especially during the time of al-Mamun (†833), when anti-Iranian sentiments gained ground in the Arab world. The Muslims also later forged a letter, in which Muhammad prophesied the end of Shah Chosroes's kingdom. "Kisra Parviz" became the prototype of evil in the Islamic world before the rise of Islam. Both worlds thus created archetypal heroes, who strengthened their own worldviews and elevated them above their enemies.

128 Ibid.

III. THE SHIRIN MYTH IN LITERATURE AND ART

The Beginnings of the Myth of Shirin and Ferhad

As a consequence of the collapse of the Sassanian Empire, the memory of Shirin quickly faded. Among Byzantine authors, only Theophanes mentioned her; in the twelfth century Zonaras was no longer familiar with her, and she was mentioned but a single time in Byzantium in the fourteenth century, when the historian Nikephoros Kallisthes essentially copied the work of Evagrius. However, Shirin was also mentioned but rarely in the works of Christian Oriental authors, appearing only in the eleventh-century Chronicle of Seert and the twelfth-century "Book of the Tower" by Mari ibn Sulaiman († c. 1160). It is typical that the great Christian historians Elias of Nisibis († 1049), Michael Syrus († 1199), and Grigorius Abu l-Farag († 1286) no longer referred to her. Elias of Nisibis was the most well-informed historian at the turn of the millennium; in his chronicle, he always cited his sources, including lost works. His silence is the most significant evidence that, four centuries after her death, the figure of the Christian queen had been forgotten. Armenian historians such as John Katholikos in the tenth century were also unfamiliar with her story. The final Christian author to make independent mention of Shirin appears to have been the East Syriac Church historian

Amr ibn Matta in the fourteenth century, who described Shirin's influence on the appointment of Catholicos Gregory, without confusing her, as did the Chronicle of Seert, with the Christian Mary.

In the Muslim world, interest developed early on in the stone relief of Taq-i Bustan in Kermanschah, Iran, which likely depicted the victory and crowning of Chosroes II. The relief was described in the geographical lexicons of the Muslims, as was the purported palace of Shirin in Bisotun in Iran. The wide adoption of the Shirin motif had already begun about 100 years after Shirin's death with the Arab poet Khalid ibn Fayyaz, who, in the first half of the eighth century, made mention of Chosroes's love for Shirin and the death of his favorite horse, and who was quoted by Ibn al-Faqih, who noted that Chosroes had ordered that the horse be painted. The lexicon of Yakut (+1229) cited texts from Ibn al-Faqih, whose work had been completed in 903. Here and in the work of Abu Imran al-Kisrawi, cited by Yakut, the woman in the upper section of the relief, who probably represents the goddess Anahita, is identified as Shirin and the horse as Chosroes's mythical steed Shabdiz.¹²⁹ Clearly the love story and the tale of Chosroes's horse had become widespread. At the start of the tenth century, the relief of Taq-i Bustan was known by the name "Shabdiz." In the folk tradition, the beloved horse stood front and center—Shirin played but a supporting role.

The Persian author Abu Ali Muhammad Balami, who in 963 expanded Tabari's history of the Sassanians, wrote expressly that the mounted figure, who can still be

129 Priscilla P. Soucek: Farhad and Taq-i Bustan: The Growth of a Legend, in: *Studies in Art and Literature of the Near East in Honor of R. Ettinghausen*, Salt Lake City 1974, 27–52, here 41.

seen in Kermanshah today, depicted Chosroes astride the horse Shabdiz.¹³⁰ Shirin was beloved by Ferhad, who was punished by Chosroes Parviz, who had him sent to the quarry of Bisotun.¹³¹ Herein lies the earliest kernel of the later saga of the carpenter Ferhad and his love for Shirin, which eventually all but eclipsed the original story. One source for the figure of Ferhad goes back to the Parthian prince Faerhad (Phraates), a second to Chosroes's purported carpenter. In his Persian adaptation of the annals of Tabari, Balami wrote that Ferhad fell in love with Shirin and was punished by Chosroes and sent to work in Bisotun. Certain elements of the saga stem from the Semiramis tales of Ktesias, in which it was said that the queen had a canal cut through the stones in her garden in Bisotun.

“Chosroes and Shirin” is clearly an etiological saga: the relief depicting the Persian shah and a woman suggests the genesis of the alleged love story. In a miniature from c. 1410 in a Nizami manuscript (Washington, Freer Gallery, 31.35), Shirin rides toward Ferhad, who stands before Taq-i Bustan's portrayal of the rider and the king above the horse. The folk tradition thus incorporated the relief, remarkable even today, and allows us to reconstruct the origins of the saga.

The Arab cosmographer and historian Masudi, in his tenth-century account of Chosroes's history, mentioned that Maurice sent his daughter Mary, accompanied by her brother Theodosius, to Chosroes¹³²; he may have adopted this error from Tabari. According to Persian

130 Ebenda, 43.

131 Ananiasz Zajaczkowski: Farhad wa-Shirin, *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 2, Leiden 1991, 793.

132 Al-Masudi: *Bis zu den Grenzen der Erde*, ed. by Gernot Rotter, Tübingen–Basel 1978, 137.

tradition, the first love poems were found on the walls of Shirin's palace (Kasr-i Shirin) in the district of Ardilan in the Persian region of Kurdistan and could still be read three centuries after her death.¹³³

In Europe the theme of a Christian woman's love for the Persian shah appeared only in the so-called "Fredegarchronik," a world chronicle of the seventh century, written by three authors, with the last of these writing around 658. In this chronicle it is recorded that "Caesarea," wife of the Persian shah "Anaulf," left her husband with four sons and daughters and fled to Patriarch John of Constantinople to request baptism. This appears to have been based on a muddled account of the story of Chosroes and Shirin.¹³⁴ The shah sent messengers after her, promising to permit her to be baptized after her return. However, the queen made her return dependent upon the baptism of her husband. He agreed to this and asked Emperor Maurice if Patriarch John might come to Antioch to baptize him. Maurice supported the plan, and 60,000 people, including the shah, were baptized in Antioch by Patriarch Gregory. Anaulf also asked Emperor Maurice to send him bishops and priests, in order to establish a network of Christian churches in Persia.

The story contains a few grains of truth. Patriarch Gregory did accompany Chosroes at the start of his campaign against Bahram Cobin, accompanied by Domitian of Melitene. "John" may refer to Patriarch John VI, "the Faster" (582-595). The account also clearly

133 Peter J. Chelkowski: *Mirror of the invisible world. Tales from the Khamseh of Nizami*, New York 1975, 46.

134 Fredegarius Scholasticus: *Chronicorum Libri Quattuor*, ed. B. Krusch (= MGH, SS Rerum Merov. II), Hannover 1888, 125f; cf. Goubert (1951), 174f.

indicates how little was known in Europe about conditions in the Orient. The possibility that a Persian shah could convert to Christianity was never greater than in the case of Chosroes II, who was married to a Christian woman who exercised great influence over the court. Memories of the baptism of Chlodwig and his Christian wife Chlotilde may also have played a role here. In Christian literature, the motif of the shah's baptism comes to the fore; Armenian sources, such as Pseudo-Sebeos, also report this of Chosroes I, but this is mere fantasy and projection.

Shortly after the death of Chosroes II, most of the Near East was overrun by adherents of the new religion of Islam. In the period of the caliphs of Damascus and Baghdad, the Arabs dominated the Orient. Not until the end of the first millennium did Persian power reemerge under Shah Mahmud of Gazna (998-1030); he permitted the caliph of Baghdad to serve only as a spiritual leader. In the East, where the myth of Shirin lived on, Middle Persian literature was born. Later the Turks adopted the tale of Chosroes and Shirin from the Iranians, and the story of Ferhad and Shirin was soon divorced from the original story to survive as an independent motif.¹³⁵

Firdausi's "Shah Namah" (c. 1000)

Around 939 in Chorassan, Abul Kasim Mansur (†1020) was born. Known to posterity as Firdausi, "the paradisiacal," he lived occasionally at the court of Mahmud. He labored for some 35 years on his work "Shah Namah," the Book of Kings, in which he recounted in 60,000 verses Persian history from the creation of the world through the heroics of Alexander the Great up to

135 Jan Rypka: *Iranische Literaturgeschichte*, Leipzig 1959, 494f.

the end of the Sassanian Empire. He also told of the fate of Queen Shirin, without mentioning her adherence to the "Apostolic Church of the East." Firdausi's Shirin had already appeared in Muslim guise as an archetype of "great love". Otherwise, however, this important poet held largely to historical fact; Chosroes's other wives, for instance, were not omitted.

Here Shirin makes her first appearance on the occasion of a festival two weeks after the wedding of Chosroes and Gurdiye, Bahram Cobin's sister.¹³⁶ Clearly the Shirin motif was familiar to people, as she was not specially introduced by Firdausi. The chapter that tells the story of Chosroes and Shirin thus begins with the poet recounting a tale from the "old book." Already during his father's lifetime, Shirin had become Chosroes's friend.¹³⁷ When he became shah, he parted from her for a time. However, during a hunting excursion, Chosroes encountered his former beloved, who appeared before him unveiled, adorned with make-up and jewelry. She reminded him of their erstwhile love affair and lamented that his love for her had waned. Right away Chosroes had her taken to his harem and then resumed the hunt. After the conclusion of the hunt, he went to his harem, where Shirin embraced him. The mobad (high priest) caught them in the act, and Chosroes asked him to marry them at once. The mobad reminded Chosroes that Shirin, on account of her lineage, was not a suitable mother for his successors. Nevertheless, Chosroes succeeded in changing the minds of the courtiers, who had rejected Shirin; a reason for the rejection is not given. The Byzantine Mary, however, remained the favored chief wife of the king. Shirin grew jealous and had Mary

136 The *Shahnama* of Firdausi, vol. 8 (1923), 364, § 48.

137 *Ibid.*, 383ff, § 56.

poisoned.¹³⁸ only a year after Mary's death was she named chief wife; she called herself the "first free woman of the land" ("banu-ye Iran"). After Chosroes's murder, during the subsequent reign of his son Siroe, Shirin was vindicated. When the king desired to have her as a wife, she asked him for time to consider this and defended herself against accusations of practicing magic and exercising a bad influence on Chosroes. She poisoned herself beside the body of her husband Chosroes.¹³⁹

Ferhad was not mentioned by Firdausi; this does not necessarily imply, however, that the motif was unknown. Clearly there was a folk tradition which Firdausi did not rework into a polished form. His concern was the history of Persia, in which Shirin played for him but a minor role. In the Orient, in every succeeding age, the "Shah Namah" became—beside Nizami's epic poem "Chosroes and Shirin," which drew upon it—the main source for the Shirin mythos, which eventually encompassed the Ferhad motif. Even into the present day, the myth has played a role in the Muslim world; the Christian background, however, has faded from memory or been suppressed. In a series of manuscripts of the "Shah Namah," one can find depictions of Shirin, as in, e.g., the manuscript in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, which shows Shirin greeted by Chosroes after the hunt.

In the eleventh century, the story of Chosroes, Shirin, and Ferhad was told by the court poet Quatran (†1072) at the courts of Tabriz and Gandja.¹⁴⁰ In the anonymous treatise "Mojmal al-Tawarikh," a historical compilation from 1126, two Ferhads were mentioned, with one described as Chosroes's army commander, who fell in

138 Ibid, 389ff, § 58.

139 The Shahnama of Firdausi, vol. 9 (1925), XLIV, 36–42, § 6.

140 Chelkowski (1975), 46.

love with Shirin. Here it was also stated that Chosroes slept with his wives sixty times a day. He had 12,000 women in his harem, among them were "Maryam, daughter of the king of Rum," Shirin, and Gurdiye, sister of Bahram Cobin. Reference was also made again to the relief of Taq-i Bustan; it is noted that a certain Kitus had the relief made and the palace built, under the supervision of General (Sihpabad) Ferhad.¹⁴¹ The latter was identified with Queen Shirin's lover. Here we can clearly see how the myth originated in a way from an explanation (etiology) of a visible artifact—a process often found in the development of a saga.

At the turn of the millennium, by means of Firdausi's great national epic, "Shah Namah"—and especially through the miniatures in the manuscripts—the Shirin legend was spread throughout the Islamic world. The theme of the ruler's love for a Christian woman first became popular with Nizami's epic "Chosroes and Shirin" in the twelfth century. From this point on, the motif was gradually and increasingly embellished. Somewhat later than Nizami, the Arab historian Ibn al-Athir (†1234) noted that Yesdegerd III was Shirin's son. He also wrote that the walls of the palace were destroyed by an earthquake in 956. In his "History of the Enemies of Islam," the princely geographer and historian Abu l-Fida (†1331) mentioned both the marriage of Chosroes and the emperor's daughter Mary—as Masudi has reported before him—and the shah's construction of a castle, "Kasr-i Shirin," near Hulwan in Iran, for Shirin, whom he had wed.¹⁴² One sees here that the author

141 Abka i-Khavari Manijeh: Das Bild des Königs in der Sassanidenzeit (= Textstudien zur Orientalistik 13), Hildesheim–Zürich–New York 2000, 191 u. 198.

142 Heshmat Moayyad: Farhad, in: Encyclopedia Iranica 9, 2001, 257f.

adopted the literary motif of Mary from Tabari, Dionysius of Tellmahre, Eutychios, Masudi, and Michael Syrus, and combined it with the etiology of Kasr-i Shirin, which had also appeared earlier in the work of Qazwini. Monuments like Taq-i Bustan's relief of the rider or the ruins of Kasr-i Shirin helped enable wider reception of the myth. The Persian historian Mirchond (+1498) may have made use of special knowledge (Sondergut) when he reported that, in his youth, Chosroes became acquainted with Shirin in the house of a noble, where she worked as a servant. He gave her a ring and, after coming to power, brought her to his court.¹⁴³

Allusions to Ferhad appeared as early as the writings of the renowned vizier Nezam al-Molk (+1092), who opined in his work "Siar al-moluk" that Chosroes's polygamy drove Shirin into the arms of Ferhad.¹⁴⁴ In 1180 Nizami quoted from this work but reinterpreted the Shirin mythos, thus creating a new archetype of love. Through Nizami's epic poem, the motif became known throughout the Muslim world in the twelfth century; as a subject for Persian miniature painting, it enjoyed great popularity. The earliest surviving depictions of the Shirin motif date back to the fourteenth century. The subject of "Shirin bathing" may possibly appear on a dish of Sayyid Shams al-Din al Husani from Kashan in Iran, dating from c. 1210, that is, shortly after Nizami's death, and housed today in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C..¹⁴⁵ More recent interpretations, however, find in the scene a motif from

143 Abulfedae *Historia Anteislamica*, ed. Heinrich O. Fleischer, Leipzig 1831, 93–95.

144 *Memoire sur diverses Antiquités de la Perse de la Dynastie des Sassanides de l'Histoire de cette Dynastie de Mirkhond*, ed. p. Silvestre de Sacy, Paris 1793, 405f; cf. *The Shahnama of Firdausi* 8 (1923), 192.

145 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 22, 1993, Plate 3.

Sufi mysticism, so the connection with Shirin is uncertain.¹⁴⁶ In light of the enormous loss of manuscripts and works of art caused by the destruction wrought during the time of Tamerlane in the early fifteenth century, one can in no way conclude from the dearth of surviving pictorial sources from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that only a few such images existed.

In Khauz-khan in Turkmenistan near Merw, a clay vessel was found, decorated with an arcade and eight arches. They frame scenes of life at court, including one showing a man leading a horse, upon which sits a woman. This is undoubtedly a portrayal of the legend of Ferhad. Khauz-khan was destroyed by the Mongols before 1220. Art historians date the vessel, which is now found in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, to the late 12th or early 13th century. In light of the enormous loss of manuscripts and artwork during the devastating period of Tamerlane in the early 15th century, one can certainly not conclude based on the few surviving artistic sources from the 13th and 14th centuries that such works of art never existed.

The Tales of the 1001 Arabian Nights

Before we turn to the literary development of the Shirin motif by Nizami and his imitators, let us take a look at the "Tales of the 1001 Arabian Nights." The genesis of this vast collection of stories is complex; its parts originated at various times in different Islamic regions. The oldest manuscript fragment dates from the ninth century; an Istanbul manuscript from the thirteenth or fourteenth century contains numerous stories from the saga cycle. As early as the tenth century, individual tales

146 Oleg Grabar: *Mostly Miniatures. An Introduction to Persian Painting*, Princeton–Oxford 1999, 43, Fig. 11.

and the story that served as the framework were in circulation. In 947 Masudi referred to the book "Hezar Efsaneh," the "Book of the Thousand Adventures," translated from Persian into Arabic and called by the people the "Book of the Thousand Nights." In 987, in his famous book catalogue "el-Fihrist," Ibn al-Nadim of Baghdad included among writings translated from Persian by Arabs the book "Hezar Efsan," the "Book of the Thousand Adventures." Clearly marking the start of the tales' development are the Persian "Hezar Efsan" stories, which were translated into Arabic and achieved popularity in Egypt during the late Fatimid period (twelfth century). A large number of the surviving stories appeared in the "Baghdad Edition," which came shortly after Egypt. Arabic manuscripts from the twelfth century have been preserved, and the Egyptian redaction of today's version dates from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Already in the fourteenth century, the framework of the tales was known in Europe. A more precise dating of the many stories from Persia, India, and Syria is not possible in individual cases. From 1704 on, the tales were available in French, thanks to the translation by Jean Antoine Galland of his fifteenth-century Egyptian manuscript. In the six-volume edition published by Enno Littman—which was based on the "Bulaker Edition," published in Cairo in 1835, and the five-volume second Calcutta edition of 1839/42—only a few tales concerning Shirin appeared.

In the 390th night, Sherezad tells the story of Chosroes and Shirin and the fisherman.¹⁴⁷ One day a fisherman came to Chosroes and gave him a large fish, for which he received 400 dirhem. Shirin criticized her husband's

147 Die Erzählungen aus den tausendundein Nächten, ed. by Enno Littmann, Bd. 3, Wiesbaden 1953, 494–496.

generosity and advised him how to get his money back. He should send for the fisherman and inquire as to the gender of the fish and then tell him he did not want a boy or a girl. The fisherman replied easily that the fish was a hermaphrodite, prompting Chosroes to give him an additional 400 dirhem. While packing up the money, which took a long time, the fisherman dropped a dirhem and picked it up, causing Shirin to say he was miserly. Chosroes then asked the fisherman why he had not let the dirhem lie. The fisherman replied, because the coin bore a picture of the king, and he did not want anyone to step on it and dishonor the king's name. Chosroes gave the fisherman yet another 400 dirhem and said, "No one should be guided by the advice of women; for one who follows their advice loses with his single dirhem also another two."

It is striking that, from the rich material offered by Firdausi in the "Shah Namah," only a few hints are preserved in the tales. In the modern edition of the tales, Persian stories are far outnumbered by the Arab and Egyptian. As Iran declined in importance during the period of the Abassid caliphate, the relative significance of the Iranian sagas decreased in comparison to the Arab and Egyptian stories. Nevertheless, the "Shah Namah" remained a great gallery of images from Persian history, from which later poets could draw. Of course, the Shirin motif experienced a new flowering with Nizami and the spread of his epic poem in the Iranian and Turkish regions at the start of the 12th century.

The popularity of the theme is demonstrated by references made to it in geographical lexicons. A manuscript of the geographical work of Qazwini from 1492/95, from the collection of the Orientalist Josef von Hammer-Purgstall, portrays the castle named for

Chosroes's prize horse Shabdiz, which was located at the foot of the mountain of Bisotun, and this picture shows two paintings. In one image, Chosroes and Shirin sit on a carpet, drinking wine. The other shows the stone relief of Chosroes on his horse.¹⁴⁸ A manuscript of the same work from 1576/77 also included the stone image of Chosroes on his horse Shabdiz and Shirin in Bisotun.¹⁴⁹ Likewise, a Turkish translation of Qazwini's work in Istanbul showed Ferhad with Shirin in Bisotun.¹⁵⁰ Reference to Shirin in an Arabic cosmography impressively illustrates the wide dissemination of the motif.

Nizami's "Chosroes and Shirin"

Nizami's verse epic belongs among the most widely disseminated works of medieval Islamic literature; more than 250 manuscripts of it have been preserved, most of these with illustrations. The manuscripts date back to as early as the thirteenth century; the oldest in the India Office (Nos. 1444) dates from 1239, that is, only three decades after the poet's death¹⁵¹, but many originated in India in the eighteenth century. Nizami was among the chief representatives of the new Persian literature. He was born between 1141 and 1146 in Gandja (Genge, Kirovabad) in present-day Azerbaijan. The verse epic "Chosroes and Shirin" summarized the material provided by Tabari and Firdausi and assimilated folk traditions. It

148 Dorothea Duda: *Islamische Handschriften I: Persische Handschriften (= Die illuminierten Handschriften und Inkunabeln der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek I/4)*, Wien 1983, 79f, Nr. NF. 155, fol. 96a u. 200a.

149 Ebenda, 167, Nr. Mixt. 324, fol. 186.

150 Norah M. Titley: *Miniatures from Turkish Manuscripts*, London 1981, 50, Nr. 43, fol. 80a.

151 Wilhelm Geiger – Ernst Kühn: *Grundriß der iranischen Philologie*, Vol. 2, Straßburg 1896/1904 (ND 1974), 241.

is dedicated to the Seljuk prince Togoril III of Hamadan (1177-1194), Atabeg Gahan Pahlawen of Gandja (+1186), and one Kizil Arsen. Characteristics of Nizami's wife were projected on to the Armenian queen Shirin, who was portrayed as a Christian. The poet died early in the thirteenth century, probably in 1209. After his death, the 6500 couplets of the epic were joined with four other "matnawis" (romantic literature, epics, and didactic poems in couplets) to form a "hamsa" (five-part collection), which served as a model for a number of later poets. From the remark about the pomegranate tree said to have grown from the handle of Ferhad's axe and Nizami's statement that he had not seen the tree but had only read about it in a manuscript, it is clear that the poet had studied earlier sources.

The work begins with a plot devised against Chosroes while his father Hormizd was still alive. Shapur, a painter and friend of Chosroes, tells Chosroes of the Armenian queen Mahin Banu and her niece Shirin. When the young shah falls in love with Shirin, Shapur travels to Armenia to look for her. He finds her, shows her a picture of Chosroes, and gives her a ring. Shirin journeys to Ctesiphon to find Chosroes. When, on the way, she stops to bathe in a spring, he catches sight of her. When jealous people mint coins bearing Chosroes's image, in order to slander him before his father, Chosroes flees. Shirin falls in love with him and rides to Ctesiphon, while Chosroes flees toward Armenia to Mahin Banu. But Shirin moves into a castle which Chosroes had built for her. Chosroes sends Shapur from Armenia to Ctesiphon to fetch Shirin and then learns of his father's death, whereupon he rides back to Ctesiphon and becomes shah, while Shirin returns to her aunt in Armenia.

Here Nizami inserted the story of Bahram Cobin's revolt (590 C.E.). Bahram rebels against Chosroes, whom he accuses of having lost his head by falling in love with Shirin. By chance, the lovers meet during a hunt and travel to Azerbaijan. Mahin Banu urges Shirin to remain chaste, since Chosroes has 10,000 women in his harem; she should set marriage as her goal. When the lovers meet, others should always be present. So they play polo—a scene often depicted in miniatures. Once a lion comes to Chosroes's tent, and he shoots it with an arrow. In gratitude, Shirin kisses his hand, and then he kisses her. When Chosroes seeks to seduce Shirin, she replies that she feels unworthy to assume the throne with him and that she is not of his status. When he fails to win her devotion, Chosroes leaves her and travels to the Byzantine Empire (Rum). Finally he arrives in Constantinople before the emperor of Byzantium, who gives him his daughter Mary as a wife. Chosroes then makes a move, with military support, against Bahram Cobin, whom he defeats in battle. Bahram escapes and flees to China. Chosroes once again occupies the throne. His thoughts returns to Shirin, and he regrets his marriage to Mary, to whom he owes his defeat of Bahram. Mahin Banu dies, and Shirin succeeds her as ruler of Armenia. In his recounting of these events, Nizami referred in particular to Firdausi.

But Shirin is unhappy and asks after Chosroes. She retreats to an isolated castle in the mountains. Chosroes, for his part, asks his wife Mary for understanding regarding his feelings for Shirin, whom he wants to bring to the castle, a plan Mary refuses to countenance. Here Nizami combined the story of Chosroes and the Ferhad saga into a single tale in verse. Shirin lives in a castle in the mountains; since getting milk is difficult, Shapur

organizes the construction of a canal by the craftsman Ferhad, who falls in love with Shirin. Chosroes learns of the situation and summons Ferhad, whom he orders to split a rock. Ferhad agrees, if the shah will relinquish Shirin. Chosroes consents. Shirin comes to the mountain of Bisotun to watch Ferhad. Later manuscripts added that Shirin has promised herself to the builder. When Chosroes hears of this, he sends Ferhad a message that Shirin has died, whereupon Ferhad commits suicide.

Shortly thereafter, Mary dies; Nizami challenged Firdausi's assertion that Shirin had her rival dispatched. When Chosroes resumes his courtship of Shirin, she succeeds in gaining marriage and recognition as queen. But Chosroes hears of the young lady Shakkar ("sugar") in Isfahan. Eventually Chosroes makes his way there, to seek pleasure with Shakkar, of whom it is said, she destroys the men with whom she amuses herself. Nizami explicitly compared Shakkar's house with the palace of Shirin, still known today in Iran as the "Kasr-i Shirin." Shakkar deceives Chosroes by sending him a servant as a lover. The shah asks about her and finally marries her. Shirin learns of this and feels profoundly betrayed. Chosroes grows weary of Shakkar and, under the guise of a hunt, draws near to Shirin's house. He gains entry, but Shirin tells him that she will only give herself to him as his wife. Chosroes swears not to touch Shirin before the marriage ceremony. He takes her from her mountain castle to Ctesiphon, where he marries her and makes her queen. However, Shirin does not want to sleep with the shah when he is drunk and sends him an old woman dressed as the queen. Shirin succeeds in educating the shah in wisdom and righteousness and in bringing his carnal urges under control. Shahpur rules over the realm of Mahin Banu.

At his father's wedding to Shirin, Chosroes's nine-year-old son makes known that he would gladly marry her. Father and son do not get along. Siroe has Chosroes captured and allows Shirin to see him. He stabs his father while he sleeps, and Chosroes, dying, refuses to wake Shirin, not wanting to disturb her rest. Siroe courts Shirin, who appears willing but hides her true feelings, and, in the end, she stabs herself beside Chosroes's corpse. Nizami emphasized that Shirin had become like Apak, his first wife, who had also died too soon: "Shirin is entirely the embodiment of Apak" (Bürgel); the work itself is a hymn in praise of marriage and love. Nizami closed with a dream Chosroes has, in which the shah receives a letter from Muhammed, commanding him to convert. Nizami retained a humanism which mitigates the atrocities described in the epic; the shah becomes a righteous ruler, transformed from an easy-going hedonist into a responsible, conscientious father of the people. The events taken from the "Shah Namah" are combined into a coherent whole. Nizami's humanism "also appears in his unique organization of the Chosroes and Shirin material."¹⁵² The historical love between Chosroes and Shirin was compared to the love between the carpenter Ferhad and Shirin. At first, the love cannot be consummated on account of Chosroes's relationships with other women, and then Ferhad becomes a delaying factor. In opposition to Shirin ("the sweet") stand two women: Mary, daughter of the Byzantine emperor, whom Chosroes must marry for political reasons, and Shakkar, a beauty from Isfahan, whom Chosroes marries to make Shirin jealous. The poet developed the story, moving from one highpoint to the next, until the tragic end, when love nevertheless triumphs.

152 Johann Christoph Bürgel: Die persische Epik, in: *Orientalisches Mittelalter*, ed. by Wolfhart Heinrichs, Wiesbaden 1990, 301–318, here 309.

Nizami's work was known even among his contemporaries. This is evident in the collection of anecdotes of Sadiduddin Afi (+1237/38), which followed Tabari and also told of the wedding of Chosroes and Mary. Afi reported that Chosroes fell in love with Shirin before he assumed the throne and that eventually, as shah, he brought her to his harem. In conclusion, he emphasized that the story of Chosroes and Shirin belonged among the "most famous stories" which had, however, already been made known by Nizami of Gandja, so it was unnecessary for him to elaborate further.

The earliest manuscripts of Nizami's work date from the fourteenth century; many include illustrations, although these were in some cases later additions. The presumably oldest illustrated manuscript of the "Khamsa" came from Mahmud ben Muhammad of Baghdad (British Library, MS Or. 13.297); it originated at the court of Sultan Ahmad Jalayir (1382-1410) and contains 23 miniatures.¹⁵³ The sultan controlled Iraq and Azerbaijan, whose capitals were Baghdad and Tabriz. The second-oldest rendering of Nizami's "Khamsa" is possibly that from the so-called "Dietz albums," acquired by the Prussian ambassador Dietz at the end of the 18th century. The portrayal of Chosroes and Shirin on a carpet, now kept in Berlin, originated between 1370 and 1400 in Istanbul, where already in earlier periods pictures had been removed from old manuscripts, which dated back to the Mongol era.¹⁵⁴ A more famous depiction of Chosroes and Shirin was produced between 1405 and 1410 in Tabriz (Washington, Freer Gallery, Nr. 31.34). The

153 The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 3, Cambridge 1983, XIII, Nr. 48.

154 Mazhar S. Ipsiroglu: *Saray-Alben* (= Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland 8), Wiesbaden 1964, 58, Nr. 78.

painter was Ali ben Hasan al-Sultani.¹⁵⁵ The earliest surviving dated manuscript of the "Shah Namah," from 1207, is found at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence (Ms. Cl. III.24); this institution also houses an illustration of Chosroes and Shirin from a "Shah Namah" from between 1460 and 1480.¹⁵⁶ Following the collapse of the empire of the Il-Khans, Iraq regained independence, and a rich cultural life flourished in Baghdad and Tabriz. Toward the end of the fifteenth century, the center of miniature painting shifted to Herat in modern Afghanistan and eventually, after conquest by the Safavid Empire, to Isfahan.

With the advances of the Muslims into northern India, the Shirin motif, along with Persian court culture, made its way into the Moghul Empire of India. The poet Amir Chosroes Dihlawi ("the man from Delhi," †1325) was the son of a Turk who fled from the Mongols in Choresmien to northern India. At the court of the five sultans of Delhi, Amir made his career as a poet and musician. He produced an imitation of Nizami's "Hamsa," which is dedicated to Sultan Alaudin Muhammad (†1316). The poet recounted the story of Shirin, following Nizami but in simpler form (1299). Chosroes flees Bahram with Shapur. Next the painter writes that in China Chosroes meets an artist, who has painted a picture of Shirin on silk. Falling in love with this image, Chosroes travels to Armenia, where he encounters Shirin during a hunt. Shirin, however, will only give herself to Chosroes as a proper wife. Chosroes flees to "Rum" and marries Mary, in order to secure military aid. Here Chosroes stands again between Mary

155 Basil Gray: *Persische Malerei*, Genf 1983, 54.

156 *Catalogo dei Manoscritti Persiani conservati nelle biblioteche d'Italia*, Roma 1989, 115f, Nr. 146.

and Shirin, who declares that she must first test Chosroes. The framework of the story, Chosroes's childhood, etc., was presumed to be already familiar to the audience. The Ferhad story was also incorporated into the narrative. But in this version the artisan is transformed into a son of the emperor of China! After Ferhad's death, Shirin poisons the shah's lover. Here Ferhad has already become an important element in the work. Worth noting are the differences from Nizami: the shah is stabbed during a palace revolt, whereupon Shirin dies of her own free will, while in Nizami's version, Shirin follows her husband into prison, where they both die.¹⁵⁷ Manuscripts of this work, which include miniature paintings, have also been preserved; examples include a 1485 manuscript containing 13 miniatures, in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (P 163), and the Berlin manuscript (Ms. Fol. Or. 187) of 1495 with 34 miniatures, some of which were later painted over.¹⁵⁸

The Adoption of the Shirin Motif by the Turks

In the fourteenth century Nizami's work was received by the Turks, in whose area of settlement in Asia Minor the Persian language and court culture predominated. Around 1341 in Kiptshak, a certain Qutb translated the Persian version of Nizami into Turkish at court; it is dedicated to the khan Tini-bek (1341-1342). The French national library possesses a copy of this translation (Paris, BN, Ms. Turcs Anc. F 312), which was made in 1383 in Egypt by a legal scholar from the region of Kiptshak. The translation adopted a series of metaphors from Turkish

157 Bozorg Alavi: Hamse, in: Kindlers Literatur-Lexikon 10, 1974, 4259.

158 Illuminierte Islamische Handschriften, ed. by I. Stchoukine, B. Flemming, P. Luft, H. Sohrweide (= Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland 16), Wiesbaden 1971, 30-35, Nr. 7.

folk literature.¹⁵⁹ Here Ferhad was portrayed as a foil for the fickle king. Around 1366 the first Turkish translation was followed by a second by Fakr al-Din Yakub, who served Emir Oghullari in Aydin. Aydin was a Seljuk emirate, which had been created in the thirteenth century by the Seljuk advance to the west and which in the fourteenth century maintained its independence on the western coast of Asia Minor around Izmir. The Gazisultan Mubarizzedin Muhammed Beg (1308-1334) brought numerous scholars to his court. The family founded a series of madrasas, which offered benefices for theologians as well as libraries. Copyists reproduced manuscripts and increased the treasury of books, and calligraphers produced illuminated manuscripts. Some of the manuscripts were also written in Persian. In 1333 the renowned traveler Ibn Battuta visited the court at Aydin.

Muhammed Beg's youngest son, Isa Beg (1360-1390), also supported scholarship and literature. From the version of the Shirin story written by Fahreddin Yakub ben Muhammed, it is evident that the sultan had heard Nizami's epic poem recited, and it was also known among the Seljuks. At the opening of the manuscript, now preserved in Göttingen (Hs. Or. Quart 1069), is written, "Recite for me the book of Husrev and Shirin! We want to hear the accusations Husrev and Shirin made each other."¹⁶⁰ Following Fahri's recitation, the courtiers demanded that

159 Ananiasz Zajaczkowski: Die früheste türkische Version des Werkes Husrev u -Sirin von Qutb, in: Akten des 24. internationalen Orientalistischen Kongresses München 1957, Wiesbaden 1959, 412-417.

160 Barbara Flemming: Fahris Husrev u Sirin vom Jahre 1367. Eine vergessene türkische Dichtung aus der Emiratszeit, in: Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft 115, 1965, 36-64, here 51.

the poet translate Nizami's work into Turkish, since the broader public did not understand Persian, and this would preserve Nizami's poetry. At first Fahri was hesitant, as he feared he could not do justice to Nizami's literary prowess. "To the best of my ability, I became Nizami's translator."¹⁶¹ In this way the memory of the sultan was also preserved, as Mahmud of Ghazna's was by the "Shah Namah." Since Nizami referred only in passing to the revolt of Bahram Cobin, the overthrow and murder of Hormizd IV, Chosroes's flight to the Byzantines, and the final clash with Bahram, Isa Beg ordered Fahri to consult Firdausi's work and expand the bounds of the narrative beyond those provided by Nizami. Fahri's work is thus an adaptation of Nizami's, incorporating important sections from the "Shah Namah." The versions were not entirely harmonized, however; the painter in the Nizami section is called Savur and in the Firdausi section Sapur. The incompletely preserved Marburg manuscript contains 4681 verses, of which approximately 3060 represent the Nizami section and 1620 the Firdausi part. Fahri thus belongs among the earliest Turkish translators of the "Shah Namah."

Some fifty years later, Sinaneddin Yusuf, called Seyhi (Sheykhi or Schechi; †1428), again translated Nizami's work into Turkish. However, this version, dedicated to the Ottoman sultan Murad II, told the story only up to the wedding of Chosroes and Shirin. Seyhi dealt freely with Nizami's model, which he both abridged and expanded with additions from the "Shah Namah." The tale of the physician and the poet is more polished than in Fahri's version. Seyhi's work may have been more widely disseminated than that of Fahri; the state library of Marburg alone houses five manuscripts of the text, with four more at the library of Gotha.

161 Ibid, 52.

Another representative of the (eastern) Turkish (Dschagatisch) literature is Ali Schir Navai (Mir Ali Sir) from Herat (+1501), who was born in Herat in 1441 and lived at the court of the famous sultan Mirza Husein Baiqara (1468-1506), the last Timurid ruler in present-day Afghanistan. After his retirement from politics in 1476, this diplomat, a friend of the poet Gami, composed a work entitled "Ferhad and Shirin" (1483/85), which consisted of 5780 couplets and borrowed from Nizami and Amir Chosroes Dihlavi. The court of the Timurids in Herat was a center not only of literature but also of miniature painting; working there was the renowned Bizhad, who, after the conquest of the country by Shah Ismail, founder of the Safavid Empire in Persia, moved to the new center of power.

In the work of Ali Schir Navai, one can observe a paradigm shift: in contrast to earlier treatments of the material, in this version Ferhad stands at the center of the action. He wins Shirin's love but dies as the result of a false report of Shirin's death. Ferhad is in this case the only son of the emperor of China. He suffers from melancholy and learns the carpenter's trade. One day, in a treasure chamber, he finds a small box with a magic mirror bearing a picture of Alexander the Great. He rides to Greece to consult Socrates, who tells him how to open the box. A woman appears in the mirror, and upon seeing her, Ferhad falls into a faint. His friend Shapur takes him to Armenia, where he joins the workers digging a canal for Queen Mahin Banu. His fame soon attracts the attention of Shirin, the queen's niece, in whom Ferhad recognizes the woman from the mirror. They fall in love, drink from the same cup, and fall unconscious at a feast, from which they must both be carried. Chosroes woos Shirin but is rejected and invades Armenia. Ferhad comes to her defense but is captured through the cunning of an

old woman and brought before Chosroes, who tries, by means of promises and threats, to persuade him to abandon his love. He is sentenced to lifelong imprisonment and sent into exile but can still exchange letters with Shirin. Chosroes learns of this and, with the false report of Shirin's death, drives Ferhad to suicide. In the meantime, Chosroes has reconciled with Mahin Banu and wants to marry Shirin but is murdered by his son Siroe, who likewise wants to marry Shirin. She appears to assent but instead has Ferhad's body brought to her and dies. The vizier Bahram of China, a friend of Ferhad, travels to Armenia, overthrows Siroe, and returns with Shahpur, in order to end his life as a hermit at the grave of the unfortunate lovers.

In contrast to Nizami's work, the focus here has shifted decisively to Ferhad; the background part of the story prior to the arrival in Armenia alone makes up half the text. Shirin no longer stands, as she had in the works of Nizami and his immediate successors, between Chosroes and Ferhad; Ferhad wins Shirin's love and devotion. He is also no longer simply a carpenter but rather a prince. A series of events in the narrative, which Nizami recounted of Chosroes, were transferred by Navai to Ferhad. In this way, he created a new prototype of the love story, which predominated among the Turks and was frequently imitated. Nizami's humanistically-oriented poem was transformed into and reinterpreted as an adventure tale. The motif has remained popular into the present day in Uzbekistan; in Samarkand and Tashkent several new editions of the work appeared in the twentieth century, and it has also been published several times in Russian translation.¹⁶²

162 Baymirza Hayit: Farhad u Sirin, in: Kindlers Literatur-Lexikon 9, 1974, 3437f.

The Later History of the Shirin Saga

The extent to which Nizami's work was known in Persian regions is also indicated by didactic literature, in which "Chosroes and Shirin" is presumed to be familiar. One example of this phenomenon is the work of Imaduddin Faqih (†1371/72), a rival of the great poet Hafiz and a university teacher in Kirman in Kurdistan, who in 1341 composed a poem, in which he hears a male palm tree's lamentation in a forest. The female palm tree replies that he has no cause to mourn, as love will be made easy for him, and she refers by contrast to Ferhad and Shirin. Following this the poet praises Nizami, who had incomparably portrayed Ferhad's agonies of love, as he broke rocks in hope of union with Shirin. After the male palm has been comforted, he tells the female the love story of Chosroes and Shirin. This illustrates the lesson that one on whom God bestows good fortune is free of all cares. Here the familiar content of the love story became material for a didactic poem, which did not linger on the details. Like the appearance of the motif on ceramics and the Berlin chest of 1609, this story confirms that the material so masterfully fashioned by Nizami was generally known in the fourteenth century.

A 1368 manuscript of the "Ferhadnama" of the Azerbaijani poet Arifi Ardabili has survived, and it, too, placed Ferhad in the foreground. The work was dedicated to Saih Uwais Bedadur Han, a regional ruler of Tabriz (1356-1374). In this work, Ferhad's position was given an entirely new assessment. The poet stated that he met one of Ferhad's descendants, who possessed a book containing the carpenter's biography, as well as the story of Shirin. In the first place, however, it concerned Ferhad's love for the beautiful Gulistan. In China with Shapur, Ferhad sees Gulistan's picture, with which he falls in love.

When received by the king of Abchasien, they meet his wife Mahin Banu and their nine-year-old daughter Shirin. At a feast hosted by Gulistan's father, Ferhad falls in love with the daughter, who is a Christian. Her father orders that Ferhad learn the stonemason's craft if he wants to marry his daughter. After accomplishing this, Ferhad marries Gulistan in a Christian ceremony. The king accuses Shapur of having failed to tell him of Ferhad's skill, otherwise he would have given him Shirin as a wife. Shapur travels to Ctesiphon, where he enjoys the favor of Shah Hormizd and his son Chosroes. Shapur then approaches Queen Mahin Banu and reports that he has told Chosroes of Shirin's beauty. The first part of the narrative ends with the death of Gulistan, which takes place during the birth of a daughter.

In the second part, in which Nizami's meter is also emulated, the poet referred to Nizami, though the latter's accounts were altered. He praised Nizami and wanted to continue and recount what he has learned of Ferhad and Shirin from the old writings. He began by relating how Chosroes, while on a hunt, espies Shirin bathing and falls in love with her. She tells him, however, that she will give herself to the shah only as his wife. At the mountain of Bisitun, she encounters Ferhad, who, contrary to Nizami's account, wins Shirin's love. The actual love story was freely refashioned by Arifi, who accused Nizami of having treated the foreign Ferhad unjustly. After the death of Mahin Banu, Shirin succeeds her. Chosroes Parviz courts her, but she flees from him to Kasr-i Shirin. Shirin sends Shapur to fetch Ferhad, who then comes to Kasr-i Shirin. Chosroes has Ferhad brought to his palace. Chosroes is again interested in Shirin, but this rouses Mary's jealousy. He leaves Shirin to the carpenter Ferhad. The mother of one of Ferhad's rivals for Gulistan

poisons Ferhad and reports this to Mary, who fears that Chosroes will turn again to Shirin. Shirin has a gravestone fashioned for Ferhad, and the story ends with the grief of the bereaved family. Arifi's poem is a Persian epic by a Turk, who worked from written sources. Chosroes and Shirin appear here in an unfavorable light. The work shows that there were, in addition to Nizami's account, folk traditions which deviated from the poet's epic humanism and focused on different aspects of the story.

The familiarity of the Shirin motif is also indicated by the occasional satirical verse. During the time of the khan Tochtamysch of Kiptschak (+1406) such verses were preserved in the "Fragment of Rien":

"Shirin ruby (lip) became partion of Khusraw (Parwiz), while Ferhad vainly pierces the rock."

Or "Where the charming ruby (lips) of Shirin are glowing, rubies and pebbles are alike in the eyes of (Farhad) the tunneler." Verses such as these presuppose the motif's familiarity—as was also the case in the geographical lexica, which included places mentioned in the saga.

Centers of art and literature were found at the capitals of the successors of Timur Leng (Tamerlane), the conqueror from Samarkand. Under his son Shah Roch (+1447), Samarkand became a center of Timurid miniature painting. In Herat, his son Baysangur (1414-1433) founded an academy and a library, for which many manuscripts were produced. That Nizami's work remained present in later Persian literature is shown by a ghazel (love poem) of the poet Gami (+1492), which portrayed Ferhad's grief. A late center of Timurid court culture was Herat in present-day Afghanistan. Those working at the court of Sultan Mirza Husain Baiqara, mentioned above,

included the aforementioned Turkish poet Ali Shir Navai, the chief librarian Mirak, and the famous painter Kamal ad-Din Bizhad (Behzad, 1450/55-1536), who can be shown to have been there beginning in 1485; the years from c. 1480 to 1490 are characterized as the "Bizhad period" in art history. The Dublin manuscript of the "Hamsa" (P 136) of Amir Chosroes Dihlavi, with its 13 miniatures, was also produced here in the same year.

Around 1493 in Herat the court painter Bizhad produced the illustrations for a 1442 manuscript of Nizami's Hamsa (London, BM, Add. 25900), and then later for a 1494 edition of the work, which was illustrated in part by him and in part by a student (London, BM, Or. 6810). Thus the Shirin material was present at the court in Herat. In 1485 the Hamsa of Mir Ali Shir Navai was painted for Sultan Husain's son Badi al-Zaman; it is kept today at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Elliot 287) and the John Rylands Library in Manchester. Also working at the sultan's court was the Persian historian Mirchond, who referred to Shirin in his work. A work entitled "The Meeting of the Lovers," which includes 70 to 77 poetic accounts of representatives of mystical love, has been attributed to Sultan Husain Baiqara himself. The sultan's authorship of the work was later challenged by Sultan Babur, the first Timurid moghul in India, in his "Baburnama." The work, composed between 1502 and 1504, includes the story of, among others, Ferhad, whose fate had been recorded by Nizami. Here it was stated that Ferahd was with Shapur in China, where both were occupied with illustrating and painting. When Shirin desired that a canal for milk be built, Shahpur referred her to Ferhad, who had lost his senses out of love for her. Gami's ghazel about Ferhad was incorporated into the text. The poet Hodscha Sihabuddin Abdullah Merawid,

called Bejani (+1516), also composed an epic poem called "Chosroes and Shirin" at the court at Herat. The Timurid court at Herat during the reign of Husain Baiqara was thus a center for the artistic depiction of the Shirin myth at the end of the Middle Ages. The moghul Babur wrote of this, "The whole habitable world never saw such a city as Herat under Sultan Husain Mirza."¹⁶³

One final significant poet of the age of Husain Mirza was Hatifi (+1520/21), a nephew of Gami, under whose instructions he composed an epic poem called "Chosroes and Shirin," in which he took up the work of Nizami and Amir Chosroes Dihlavi. The poet held to historical models and described the life of Chosroes, whom Shahpur tells of Shirin's beauty. When anyone looks at her, he must tear out his eyes. Shahpur puts up a mirror, with which he captures and displays Shirin's image. He also paints a portrait of Chosroes. The painting is carried by the wind to Shirin, who falls in love with the picture of Chosroes. The two are able to meet, but the revolt of Bahram Cobin stands in the way of their happiness. These events, after which the castle was built for Shirin, are presumed to be well-known. Then comes the construction of the canal to get milk to the castle. Ferhad falls in love with Shirin but is incarcerated by the jealous Chosroes. He frees himself, however, by digging a shaft, and produces a ring bearing a likeness of Shirin. When Chosroes sends for him and makes accusations against him, Ferhad appeals to the equality of all people. Chosroes finally has an old woman sent to him, and she brings him news of Shirin's death, whereupon Ferhad commits suicide.

163 Fischer Weltgeschichte 16: Zentralasien, ed. by Gavin Hambly, Frankfurt/Main 1995, 169.

Hatifi belonged to the age of Ismail I (1502-1524), founder of the Persian Safavid dynasty. After Ismail's conquest of Herat, a number of artists, including Bizhad, moved to the court of the shah in Iran. Also falling into this transitional period was the Herat-educated poet Hilali (†c. 1530), who wrote a "Book on the Characteristics of Love," in which he recounted Ferhad's construction of the canal for Shirin. On instructions from Shah Tamasp (1524-1576), the poet Wahsi (†1583/84) composed the epic "Ferhad and Shirin," which remained unfinished until completed in the mid-19th century by a Persian poet. The poet's work retained a presence in Persian literature and appeared in a new critical edition in 1889. Additional copies of Nizami's work were produced and illustrated with miniatures at the court of the shah in Isfahan, but the center of further development shifted to India. Manuscripts, including Nizami's "Khamsa," were taken by the Muslims to India and later decorated with miniatures, as was the case with a manuscript dating from the early 15th century; in India between 1585 and 1590, the picture that shows Chosroes and Shirin in bed was embellished in the Moghul style.¹⁶⁴

The poet Urfi-i-Schirazi (†1590/91) belonged to the entourage of the Indian emperor Akbar; he also composed an epic poem called "Ferhad and Shirin," using Nizami's meter. He did not, however, seek to tell the story in the usual fashion but rather to illustrate the mystery of love. Shirin is to a certain extent a personification of the feelings and emotions portrayed by Urfi. Since the real action of the story is almost entirely absent, it is assumed that the surviving work is only a fragment. "Urfi turned the

164 Milo Cleveland Beach: Mughal and Rajput Painting (= The New Cambridge History of India I/3), Cambridge, ND 2000, 50–52, Abb. 33.

familiar episode into lyric poetry and associated the figures of Ferhad and Shirin with lyrical ideas, so that they henceforth belonged unquestionably in the inventory of Persian and Ottoman lyric love poetry."¹⁶⁵ Shirin thus became an archetype of love, to which nothing more needed to be added.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well, the motif enjoyed great popularity in Iran, the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia, and India.¹⁶⁶ It was included in the famous shadow plays of the Turks and was also taken up in music and by the Christian peoples on the edges of the Ottoman Empire, e.g., those in Georgia. Under King Wachtang VI (1711-14 and 1719-23), who lived for many years in Iran, the work "Khosrovshiriniani," a popular version of Amir Chosroes Dihlavi's "Chosroes and Shirin," was translated into Georgian.¹⁶⁷ This late adoption of the motif did not, of course, reach Europe, which only later became aware of Persian literature. In Europe Nizami's work was first made known through Barthelemy d'Herbelot's encyclopedia "Bibliothèque orientale ou dictionnaire universel," which appeared in Paris in 1697. Since it was also available at the Hofbibliothek in Vienna, the Orientalist Josef von Hammer may have first become acquainted with the motif in 1794 by means of this work.

165 Duda (1933), 116.

166 Ebenda, 116–120; Geiger – Kühn (1896/1904), 246f.

167 Aleksandre Gvakharia: Georgia IV: Literary Contacts with Persia, in: Encyclopedia Iranica 11, London–New York 2001, 481–486, here 484.

IV. THE REDISCOVERY OF SHIRIN

Josef von Hammer-Purgstall

The rediscovery of the Shirin motif was the work of the Orientalist Josef von Hammer-Purgstall. Josef von Hammer, born in Graz in 1774, arrived at the age of 14 at Vienna's "Akademie für die orientalischen Sprachen" (Academy of Oriental Languages), founded by Mary Theresia, where he studied Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, in preparation for a diplomatic career. By age twenty, he could read Turkish and Persian works and communicate in these languages. In 1796 the Swiss writer John von Müller, who lived in Vienna, initiated contact between Hammer and the German poet Christoph Martin Wieland, editor of the "Neuen Teutschen Merkur" ("New German Mercury"). In 1794 Hammer had discovered, through his Oriental studies, the motif of "Ferhad and Shirin," which greatly fascinated him. In 1798 he submitted samples of his free renderings of "Ferhad and Shirin," as well as "Shirin to Ferhad" ("Shirin an Ferhad") to the "Merkur," where they were published.¹⁶⁸ On October 5, 1799, he gave the editor Carl August Böttiger the entire manuscript of the work he called "Schirin," but it first appeared as a

168 Wilhelm Baum: Josef von Hammer-Purgstall – ein österreichischer Pionier der Orientalistik, in: Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur 46, 2002, 224–239, here 226.

book only ten years later, published by Fleischer in Leipzig. Böttiger's hope that Hammer's "Schirin" "had become the latest favorite" of Wieland was not fulfilled.¹⁶⁹ Wieland refused to publish the text, which offered a jumble of translations and free renderings from various Persian and Turkish authors. Of course, Böttiger did not tell Hammer this but simply acknowledged the receipt of the second part, which he passed on to Wieland. Not until June 1802 did Böttiger inform Hammer that Wieland and Herder had rejected publication of the manuscript on account of the poetry. However, their objections concerned only the form and poetic style of his language. Böttiger conceded that Hammer had "opened up a world of wonder and magnificence, as we had never seen before."¹⁷⁰ The rejection of the Shirin manuscript resulted in enduring enmity and the breakdown of the relationship between Hammer and Wieland.

Hammer's philological knowledge remains a source of controversy to this day. Colleagues in the discipline, such as the Berliner Heinrich Friedrich von Diez—Goethe's adviser in Oriental studies—accused him of inaccuracies. At the conclusion of his Oriental studies in 1799, Hammer entered the diplomatic service in Vienna and joined the Austrian legation to Constantinople. From his posting in the Turkish capital, he brought back to Vienna a great number of manuscripts, mostly of an encyclopedic nature, which provided for the first time an overview of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature and history. From a modern perspective, one ought to take into account that in German-speaking regions, the scholarly discipline of Oriental studies was only in its

169 Thomas C. Starnes: Christoph Martin Wieland. *Leben und Werk*, Bd. 2: 1784–1799, Sigmaringen 1987, 761.

170 Ebenda, Bd. 3, Sigmaringen 1987, 102.

infancy. Hammer's error may simply have been that he was unable to distinguish clearly between poetry and the academic study of history and thus confused the two. This comes to the fore in particular in the book "Schirin," which introduced all at once a saga previously unknown in Europe.

The texts that Hammer rendered freely into German in his book "Schirin" came from the Persian authors Nizami, Amir Chosroes Dihlavi, Asaf Han, and Hatifi, as well as the Turkish poets Ahi and Seyhi. In the preface, he emphasized that he wanted to write a Western/Eastern work, which would aid in the mutual understanding of the cultures. "It is the love story of Shirin, a Christian princess, first with Chosroes Parwis, then with Ferhad, a knight errant....Shirin is finally the ideal of feminine beauty in the Orient." The work consists of two parts. He wrote the "opening," the dedication poem for the first volume, while on the European side of the Bosphorus, and the beginning of the second part while on the Asian side. He characterized his work as a "Musivwerk," that is, a mosaic and a reworking of literary models. A modern German specialist finds Hammer's greatest contribution in the area of cultural mediation: "It is in any case undeniable that Hammer's contribution with his Shirin was to acquaint the West for the first time with one of the most famous classical love stories of the Orient in a detailed, poetic rendering, which has a good feel for the Oriental style."¹⁷¹

At the start of his work, in the first canto, Hammer introduced the fourteen-year-old beauty Shirin, who finds in the forest the picture of a man. A hermit tells the

171 Hasan Sevımcın: Hammer-Purgstall und der Orient, phil. Diss., Wien 1955, 175.

girl that it is a picture of Chosroes, the greatest ruler of Asia. Shirin's reputation has reached him, and he has had his painter Shapur paint the picture. Shirin then rides to Chosroes in Ctesiphon, who, for his part, is looking for Shirin, whom he sees bathing but does not recognize. Shirin returns and finds the love of Chosroes. The first part ends with the wedding of the lovers.

As the second part begins, Shirin, after many years of marriage, meets the carpenter Ferhad, who is of royal blood and builds for her a canal to transport milk and a palace. Ferhad falls in love with Shirin but is sent into exile by Chosroes, who has been incited by the cunning woman Garimar. On the mountain of Bisotun near Kermanschah, Ferhad puts up huge images of Shirin. Shirin asks him to sacrifice his affections for the sake of duty. Ferhad is full of despair and writes to Shirin, who then visits him. When this becomes known at court, Garimar incites Chosroes against Shirin. Chosroes's son Siroe kills his father and asks for Shirin's hand. She kills herself, whereupon Ferhad also commits suicide.

Hammer clearly reshaped his models and, for instance, omitted entirely the story of Bahram Cobin. Shirin herself comes to the foreground. While in Nizami's version Chosroes flees to Armenia to escape his father, in Hammer's account he travels there to meet Shirin. In Hammer's work, the motif of Shirin's jealousy of Mary is no longer present. According to Hammer, Shirin first gets to know Ferhad after she has been married to Chosroes for many years and her love for the shah has grown cold. Here Ferhad dies only after Shirin's death. Hammer's "Schirin" is thus in no way simply a translation and free rendering of Nizami. However, Hammer disguised these matters with his subtitle, "a Persian romantic poem according to Oriental sources."

In Hammer's work, the action is tightened up, while the narratives of the Persian authors were frequently interrupted by interpolations. Nevertheless, the stories of "Jussuf and Sulaika" and "Solomon and Bilkis" were woven into the action, which was not the case in Nizami's work. In any case, Hammer used and reworked the Persian and Turkish models to create from them a romantic love story.

But years passed before publication of the "Schirin" book. Since he could find no publisher, Hammer corresponded with Böttiger in 1806 and 1807 in order finally to bring out the work. He remained in Constantinople until 1806 and then became consul general in Jassy. In 1807 he was recalled to Vienna. With this, his diplomatic career came to an end. In Vienna Hammer could better pursue his literary interests. In 1808 he met August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Madame de Stael and later also the former's brother Friedrich Schlegel, who was among Vienna's conservative intellectual forerunners of the Metternich era. Hammer showed August Wilhelm the manuscript of "Schirin," with which the literary scholar declared himself "very pleased" in June 1809.¹⁷² However, no other clues indicate the Schegel brothers' support for Hammer's work.

Goethe's "West-östlicher Divan"

Since 1807 Goethe's publisher Cotta had been exchanging letters with Hammer. He told Goethe of Hammer's translation of the "Divan" of the Persian poet Hafis; in 1814 he sent him the book.¹⁷³ In 1815/16 Goethe

172 Joseph Körner: *Krisenjahre der Frühromantik. Briefe aus dem Schlegelkreis*, Bd. 3, Bern-München 1969, 288.

173 Katharina Mommsen: *Goethe und die arabische Welt*, 2. ed., Frankfurt/Main 1989, 50.

borrowed from the Weimar library Hammer's "Fundgruben des Orients" ("Treasure Troves of the Orient"), the earliest German-language journal of Oriental studies. In 1818 he studied Hammer's "Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens" ("History of the Beautiful Rhetorical Arts of Persia"). His famous "West-östlicher Divan," with which he tried to make known to the public the literature of the Orient, appeared in 1819. Among the Persian poets in whom Goethe was interested were Firdausi, Nizami, and Hafis. In his "Notes and discourses toward better understanding of the West-eastern Divan," he admitted that, despite the criticism of the Orientalist Diez, he had studied Hammer's works: "Every section of my little book shows the extent to which I am indebted to this worthy man. I have long been aware of Hafis and his poetry, but what literature, travel diaries, contemporary reports (Timeleave), and so forth brought to my attention, gave me no notion, no idea of the value of the contributions of this extraordinary man... May the merits of the radiant Shirin, of the charming, earnestly didactic threesome (Cloverleave), which pleases us at the conclusion of our work, be recognized by all."¹⁷⁴ He defended Hammer against his philological opponents and commended his translation of Firdausi and Nizami.

The Weimar Goethe archive has files of preliminary drafts of the poet's work on the "Divan." One piece of paper offers evidence of Hammer's translation of a fragment of the "Shah Namah": "Von Chosru und Schirin gegen das Ende des Schah nameh" ("Of Chosroes and Shirin, toward the end of the Shah Namah")¹⁷⁵. One of the preserved notes refers to Hammer's fragmentary

174 Goethes Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe (= WA), Bd. 7 (1888), ND München 1987, 231 u. 234.

175 Ebenda, 281.

translation of the Shah Nama: "Von Chosru und Schirin gegen das Ende des Schah nameh" (Of Chosroe and Shirin, as found in the final parts of the Shah Nama). This fragment contains a translation of the Shirin story told in the eighth section of the Shah Nama. Thus both Hammer and Goethe were familiar with the story of Chosroes and Shirin not only from Nizami but also from Firdausi's "Shah Namah"! Other excerpts concern the poet Gami; in 1814 Goethe excerpted sections from Herbelot's "Bibliothèque orientale" (1697), which offered the first European reference to Nizami. Herbelot discusses, among other things, the fact that, for Muslims, Shirin and Chosroes never served as a symbol for divine love. In 1815, Goethe used Herbelot's encyclopedia as the source for a list of lovers. At the end of May 1815 he traveled along the Rhine, where, in Wiesbaden in 1814, he had met Marynne Jung, a 31-year-old Austrian, who had come to Frankfurt as a dancer and singer and had married the considerably older banker Johann Jakob von Willemer. On this journey along the Rhine, Goethe discussed his poem "Süßes Kind, die Perlenreihen..." (Dear child, this pearl necklace...) with his friend Sulpiz Boisserée. The poem is loosely based on the story of Shirin and Chosroes, and relates an incident in which Chosroes discovers a necklace with an amber cross belonging to Shirin. The king criticizes the "western folly" ("westliche Narrheit") that the cross represents. On August 8, 1815, Boisserée recommends Goethe to discard the poem because of the overt expression of the poet's antipathy for the cross. Goethe replied that he would pass on the poem to his son August, who received all the texts written to vent his anger. The source of the pearl necklace motif in the poem, however, is unclear. In August and September of 1815, Goethe's passion for the newly married banker's wife revealed itself, and he immortalized it in the "Buch

Sulaika." By means of Nizami, the motif of "Jussuf and Sulaika"—Potiphar's wife—became a theme which continued to haunt Goethe. In the case of Sulaika, the most sensuous love become "the most moderate, she lived chastely beside him, as Goethe read in Mr. Hammer."¹⁷⁶ Marynne von Willemer composed the verses with him—she was Goethe's only lover who was a poet in her own right. Goethe projected his own feelings and sublimations onto the figure of Sulaika.

In the "Divan," six couples were included in the category of "ideal models": Rustam and Rodawu from the "Shah Namah," Jussuf and Sulaika, and Nizami's Ferhad and Shirin:

"Love not love's gain:

Ferhad and Shirin....

If you heed them well,

You will be strengthened in love."¹⁷⁷

In the "Notes and Discourses," Goethe wrote of Nizami: "A gentle, highly gifted spirit, who, when Firdausi had exhausted the collected heroic traditions, chose for the material of his poems the sweetest encounters of the deepest love. Medschnun and Leila, Chosroes and Shirin, lovers he presented; meant for one another by premonition, destiny, nature, habit, inclination, passion, staunchly devoted to each other; but divided by mad ideas, stubbornness, chance, necessity, and force, then miraculously reunited, yet in the end again in one way or another torn apart and separated from each

176 Richard Friedenthal: Goethe. Sein Leben und seine Zeit, 16. ed., München 1989, 507.

177 Goethes Werke, WA, Bd. 7 (1888), ND München 1987, 49.

other."¹⁷⁸ His "Noten und Abhandlungen zum besseren Verständnis des west-östlichen Divans" (Remarks and essays for a deeper appreciation of the "West-östlicher Divan") suggest that Goethe was familiar with Shirin's Christian origins. "How manifold the inconveniences, indeed misfortunes, that befell the eminent prince Chosroe Parvis, merely because Shirin, graceful and charming, abode by her Christian faith." Goethe's knowledge seems to have reached beyond the available sources of Firdausi's fragment and Nizami, being familiar with the latter only by Herbelot's encyclopedia.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the first edition of Goethe's "West-eastern Divan" simply sat at the publisher until the early twentieth century. Interest in the Orient in German-speaking regions was less than in the English and French worlds. For Goethe, Shirin belonged to the "ideal models"—C. J. Jung would later call these "archetypes." Nizami and his imitators had elevated the Christian queen to an archetype of love and thus laid the groundwork for the adoption of the motif, which in the twentieth century was even brought to film. Dehkhoda, an Iranian author, who studied the works of Nizami and Gami at Cambridge in 1919, wrote in the following year the screenplay, "The Shah of Iran and the Banu of Armenia." In 1947, while in the prison of Bursa, the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet wrote a play called "Ferhad and Shirin," which was produced in 1983 by the Turkish theatrical troupe of the West Berlin theater, with Ayse Emel Masci in the role of Shirin. That the motif continues to inspire artists today is shown by the orchestral work "Gesänge der Schirin" ("Songs of Shirin") (1982) by the Frankfurt composer Gerhard Müller-Hornbach. There are very few figures who have, like

178 Ibid, WA, vol. 8 (1888), reprint München 1987, 56.

Shirin, retained a presence in the human imagination, despite historical change, for over 1400 years.

The rise of the Christian to lover and wife of the shah, her devotion unto death by suicide, represent in paradigmatic form the greatness and tragedy of love and devotion in a world of changing values, religions, and ideologies, in which, nevertheless, love has maintained to this day its unique position in human life. The archetypal foundation motifs, such as the observation while bathing, the temptation of the love triangle, and the influence of eros in politics can be seen in the way the Shirin myth has been used over the centuries. Integration into the liturgy (e.g., the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross) and the demands of religion reinforced this process. Visible monuments of the past, such as ruins and stone relief sculptures, made creation of the myth easier. Although the period of the Sassanians has been much less studied than Roman or Byzantine history, it was nonetheless possible, despite the great loss of sources in the Orient—a result in particular of the decline of the “Nestorians”—to construct a picture of this important woman, whose effectiveness and perseverance behind the scenes made a great impression upon her contemporaries. After the destruction of the Persian Empire by the Arabs, she survived as an archetype of love in Persian and Turkish literature and painting, as well as in the literature and art of the Moghuls in India, up to the present day. Goethe’s influence made possible the adoption of the myth in the literature of the West, as well. The figure of Shirin also makes clear the ways in which the Orient and Europe have been and remain linked together.

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SHIRIN

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

531-579 Chosroes I., King of Persia

573 The Persians conquer Dara

579-590 Hormizd IV., King of Persia

582-595 Ishoyahb I., Catholicos of the Eastern Church
("Nestorian")

590 II 6 Deposition of Hormizd IV.

590-628 Chosroes II., King of Persia

590 II15 Coronation of Chosroes II.

590 III 9 Bahram Cobin proclaims himself King
Bahram VI.

590 Spring: Bahram (VI.) Cobin starts a revolt

590 III 1 Chosroes escapes to Kirkesion/ Raqqa

591 Narsès moves to Gantzag, Chosroes II. returns

591 VI The people of Byzantium defeat Bahram

591 Autumn: peace treaty between Chosroes II. and
emperor Maurikios; borders are reset

v. 592 V Gregorios of Antiochien (+ 592 V) is given
back the cross that was stolen by Chosroes I.

592 Chosroes II. marries Shirin

592/93 Birth of Shirin's first child

- 593 III 25 Anastasius reclaims the position of patriarch of Antiochien
- 593 Second donation by Chosroes to the Sergius-relic in Resafa
- 594/ 601 Bistam starts a revolt, Chosroes's dream of Sabrisho (?)
- 596 IV 19 Election of the Catholicos Sabrisho
- 596-605 Sabrisho I., Catholicos of the Eastern Church, is supported by Shirin
- 596 V Synod of the Eastern Church: Henana is condemned
- Around 598 Foundation of the Shirin-monastery in Ktesiphon
- Around 601/02 Shirin gives birth to Merdanschah; more children
- v.602 Shirin prevents Daniel's relics from being given to Maurikios
- 602 Numan III. and the Lakhmiden of Hira are brought down
- 602 XI 27 Constantinople: Maurikios is brought down and assassinated; Emperor Phokas (602-610)
- 604 Chosroes's campaign against Byzantium; Conquest of Dara; Sabrisho I. stays in Nisibis
- Beginning of 605 Chosroes wants Sabrisho to reverse the excommunication of Gabriel of Singar; the Catholicos escapes to the Arabians
- 605 Gregor of Phraat is nominated Catholicos (605-609) due to Shirin's effort
- 606 The Persians conquer Amida and Resaina

- 607/08 The churches of Armenia and Georgia break off relations
- 609 The Persians conquer Edessa; Religious relations are changed
- 609 Putsch against Phokas in Egypt
- 610-641 Heraclius I., Revolt against Phokas; Phokas is assassinated
- 612 Religious debate in Ktesiphon (?)
- 613 The Persians conquer Damascus
- 614 V Shahrbaraz conquers Jerusalem; the cross is taken to Ktesiphon
- 614 Sahin and the Persian army move to Chalkedon; retreat because of Philippikos
- 615 I 14 Martyrdom of Giwargis; the Persians conquer Antiochia
- 617 The Awaren-Khan reach Constantinople
- 619 The Persians conquer Egypt
- 622 Chosroes demands a peace tribute by Heraclius
- 622 IV-623 I Heraclius' first campaign against the Persians
- 623 or 624 IV (?) Heraclius' second campaign to Armenia
- 624 (?) Heraclius destroys the Temple of Fire of Gantzag in Aserbeidschan
- 626 VI to VIII Sharbaraz moves to Constantinople with a Persian army
- 626-628 Heraclius' third campaign against the Persians
- 626 Georgios Pisides "Bellum Avaricum"

- 627 XII Heraclius defeats the Persians in Ninive
- 628 I 22 Martyrdom of the sacred Anastasius
- 628 I Heraclius in Dastagerd; he offers Chosroes peace
- 628 II 29 Chosroes II. is murdered; Shiroe is crowned as Kavad II
- 628 II Kavad II. guarantees Heraclius the return of the cross
- 628 III 15 Gantzag: Heraclius reports about Chosroes's death
- 628 IX + Kavad II
- 628-630 Ardashir III (child); Reign of the Custodian
- 628 Babai the Great refuses the duty of Catholicos; Functioning as Persian envoy, the new Catholicos, Ishoyahb II, (628-646) meets Heraclius in Aleppo
- 628 Autumn: Heraclius returns to Constantinople
- 629/31 Heraclius takes the cross back to Jerusalem
- 629 VIII Heraclius meets Sharbaraz in Arabissus and makes peace with Persia
- 630 Spring: Sharbaraz has Ardashir assassinated
- 630 Sharbaraz is assassinated
- 630-631 Boran, daughter of Chosroes II
- 631 Azarmihdas, daughter of Chosroes II
- 633-651 Yesdegerd III., son of Sharyars, last Persian king
- 636 The Arabians defeat the Persians in Qadisiyya

MANUSCRIPTS INCLUDING SHIRIN - PAINTINGS

Nizami: Chosroes and Shirin

1. London, British Library, MS Or. 13.297, fol. 80a and 88a (Bagdad 1386/88): Chosroes in front of Shirin's palace; and Shirin bowing in front of Chosroes)
2. Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Diezische Klebeband A fol. 71, page. 6, No. 2 (around 1370/1400): Chosroes and Shirin on a carpet
3. Washington Freer Gallery No. 31.34 (Täbris 1405/10): Ferhad is brought to Shirin, and Ferhad gores the rock, by Ali to Hasan al-Sultani;) No. 31.35 (1st half of the 15th century.): Shirin visits Ferhad; 31.33: Chosroes sees Shirin taking a bath; 31.33 Chosroes and Shirin go hunting; 31.336: Chosroes at Shirin's castle
4. London, British Museum, Add. 27.261, fol. 38r (Iskandar Anthology; Schiras 1410/11): Shirin looking at Chosroes' picture; and Ferhad taking Shirin to the Bisutun rock
5. Paris (M.L.Cartier): around 1410/20: Chosroes striking a lion dead; Shirin and Ferhad
6. Berlin, Museum of Islamic Art, J. 4628 (Schiras 1420): Chosroes meeting Shirin

7. Paris, BN, suppl. Pers. 1112, fol 17 and 44 (around 1420): Chosroes sees Shirin taking a bath and Shirin visits Ferhad
8. Paris, BN, suppl. Pers. 362, fol. 14v (1420/50): Chosroes sees Shirin taking a bath
9. London, British Library, MS Or. 13802, fol. 88a (Herat 1421), Shirin sees Chosroes' portrait
10. Washington, Freer Gallery, (1396/1430): Schapur taking Ferhad to Shirin, Shirin in front of Chosroes' castle, Chosroes sees Shirin taking a bath, Shirin visiting Ferhad
11. St. Petersburg, Eremitage (VR 1000, 1431): Ferhad carrying Shirin and her horse. (38 miniatures).
12. Paris (M. H. Vever): (1433): Chosroes striking a lion dead with Shirin being present
13. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Diez A, fol. 7, fol. 53a, 61a and 82a (1440/50: Chosroes watching Shirin taking a bath, Chosroes and Shirin going hunting; and Ferhad carrying Shirin to Bisutun.
14. Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS. Pers. 36 (1444/45): Chosroes and Shirin talking to a sage; a game of polo between Chosroes and Shirin; Shirin visiting Ferhad.
15. London, British Library, Add. 25900, fol. 3 (Herat 1442/43; around 1490), probably by Bizhad e.g. . Chosroes and Shirin listening to the stories Shirin's maidservants tell (1535/40 Safawiden - School)
16. Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 781, fol. 40 (1445/46): Shirin taking a bath
17. Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, Revan 866, fol. 85a (Yazd 1446/47): Ferhad carrying Shirin

18. Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 762, for Abu l' Quasim Babur (1449-1457), fol. 38v: Shirin taking a bath; fol. 69r: Ferhad carrying Shirin together with her horse (around 1470 respectively 1481)
19. London, British Museum, Or. 2931, fol. 75 (1474; Chosroes and Shirin playing ball)
20. Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 761, 1461, Paintings from the year 1476 (17 Paintings by Fakhr al-Din Ahmad); fol. 63b: Ferhad carrying Shirin)
21. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts: 1463: Chosroes in front of Shirin's castle
22. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Sprenger 1475 (15th century.; 16 out of 45 Paintings relating to Shirin)
23. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, 1991 (1487), fol. 42b; 51a, 73b, 82a, 96b and 103b (Shirin sees Chosroes' picture; Shirin meeting Chosroes; Shirin visiting Ferhad; Chosroes asking Shirin for forgiveness; wedding night; Shirin's death)
24. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Pers. Ms. 162, fol. 73a, (1481/82): Shirin visiting Ferhad.
25. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Ms. or. Quart 1665, fol. 40b, 44b and 78a (1485: by Sultan Husayn b. Sultan Ali): Shirin receiving Chosroes' picture; Shirin taking a bath, Chosroes in front of Shirin's castle.
26. Rom, Bibl. dell' Accademia naz. dei Lincei, Ms. Castani 36 (15th century) fol. 92r and 98 v.: Shirin together with one of her maidservants and Shirin's suicide.
27. London, British Museum, Or. 13948 (Herat around 1490) with ottoman paintings from around 1520, fol. 101b): Chosroes sees Shirin.

28. Wien, ÖNB Pers. HS 512 (1500) to the Atabeg Kizil Arslan (fol. 42v-152r, with paintings on fol. 62r: Shirin taking a bath, 69v: Chosroes and Shirin, 72v, 75v, 111r and 133v.
29. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. Oct. 2050, fol. 63a (1504 from Hasan to Kamal ad-Din): Chosroes together with Shirin, wedding.
30. London, Keir Collection (Täbris 1505: Chosroes in front of Shirin's palace and Shirin's suicide)
31. New York, Public Library, Spencer, Pers. Ms. 47 (Schiras 1515): 5 Shirin -Paintings.
32. New York, Metropolitan Museum, Jackson & Yohannan 8 (Täbris 1525): 13 miniatures; among those miniatures: Shirin taking a bath, Chosroes' and Shirin's wedding, Shirin on horseback watching Ferhad; and Ferhad encountering Shirin at the alley way
33. London, British Museum, Or. 2265 (Täbris 1539-1543 to Schah Tahmasp): fol. 48v: Shirin in Sultan Muhammed's bathroom and 66v.: Chosroes and Shirin listening to the stories Shirin's maidservants tell.
34. Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum (single sheet; around 1540): Chosroes and Shirin.
35. Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, Hazine 2161, fol. 143b (Täbris, around 1540): Chosroes sees Shirin while going hunting.
36. Teheran, Library of the Gulistan-Palace: (Herat 1547): Shirin taking a bath.
37. Teheran, Library of the Gulistan-Palace (In the middle of the 16th century., MS by Muhammad Qasim Schirazi): Shirin playing polo)

38. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. fol. 192 (1549): Shirin visiting Ferhad, fol. 23a.
39. Florenz, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Or. 11, fol. 41v (1st half of the 16th century): Shirin taking a bath.
40. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Smith Lesauf 216, 65b (Kabul 1550 by Movlena Dovenish Muhammad): Ferhad carrying Shirin on his shoulders.
41. Paris, Sammlung Ducoté: (In the middle of the 16th century): miniature: Shirin taking a bath.
42. Ardabil Shrine, Iran (around 1550): Chosroes and Shirin going hunting, and Ferhad carrying Shirin.
43. New York, Public Library, Spencer, Pers. Ms. 51 (Schiraz ? 1560): 6 Shirin -Paintings.
44. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. Quart 1940, fol. 112a (1566/67): Shirin taking a bath.
45. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Minutoli I 23 (1573/74): Shirin taking a bath, Shirin visiting Ferhad, Shirin committing suicide at Chosroes' graveside
46. Mailand, Bibl. Naz. Braidense, Ms. Fondo Castiglioni 22 (1540-1580), fol. 46v and 112r: Shirin taking a bath and wedding night.
47. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Museum NE P. 33 (Schiras 1584): Chosroes seeing Shirin for the first time; and Shirin taking a bath.
48. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Petermann II, 698 (1584 from Dust Muhammad to Ali Dust): Ferhad in front of Shirin, Chosroes in front of Shirin's castle, Shirin visiting Chosroes, Chosroes and Shirin on the throne)
49. Pontresina, The Keir Collection, (Delhi 1585: Basawan and Dharm Das): Chosroes and Shirin in bed - following a draft from Yazd in Iran.

50. Halle, Library of the German Oriental Community, MS pers. 23: Shirin getting a cup from one of her maidservants.
51. Teheran, Library of the Gulistan Palace: Shirin taking a bath, Shirin visiting Ferhad.
52. Teheran, Collection of the Archaeological Museum: Shirin taking a bath, by Muin, student of Riza Abbasi in Isfahan.
53. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 1939 (16th century), fol. 40a, 64b, 85b and 90b: Shirin taking a bath; Shirin visiting Ferhad; Chosroes and Shirin, Shirin's death.
54. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 1948 (16th century), fol. 38a: Shirin taking a bath.
55. Berlin, Islamic Museum: Yusuf Isfahan's coffer, coffer from 1609.
56. Dublin, Chester Beatty 11A.36 (around 1630): Shirin taking a bath.
57. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS 469, fol. 128 (Isfahan 1675 by Muhammad Zaman): Shirin and Chosroes' murderers.
58. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 2066, fol. 75a (16th and 17th century): Shirin taking a bath.
59. London, Indian Office Library: Johnson Album 66, No. 7 (Faizabad, around 1760/70 by Mir Kaban Khan): Shirin finding Ferhad.
60. Berlin, Ms. Or. Oct. 4048: Husrau va Sirin 1765 by Rizqallah (36 Shirin-Paintings).
61. London, Indian Office Library: MS Richard Johnson (1782, Lucknow)

62. New York, Public Library, Spencer Indo-Pers. Ms. 18: (Kaschmir 1806): 18 Shirin-Paintings.
63. Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 1990, fol. 38a: Shirin taking a bath
64. Dublin, Chester Beatty 73.6 (18th century): Shirin sitting on a rock.
65. Berlin, Ms. Minutoli 154 (1832, Qadgarisch): Shirin taking a bath.
66. New York, Public Library, Spencer, Indo-Pers. Ms. 20: (Kaschmir 1888): 7 Shirin - Paintings.

Shirin-Paintings in Firdausis Schahname

1. Florenz, Bibl. Naz. Centrale Ms. Cl. III. 48 (II.III.2) (around 1460/80): fol.337v: Shirin and Chosroes.
2. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. fol. 359, fol. 576a (Schiras 1560/70): encounter between Chosroes and Shirin).
3. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. fol. 172, fol. 657a (1605/28): Chosroes in front of Shirin's castle.
4. Rom, Bibl. Casanatense, Ms. 4893, fol. 528r (1627): Chosroes welcoming Shirin at court.
5. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Minutoli 134, fol. 572b (1830): Barbud singing in front of Chosroes and Shirin.

Amir Chosroes Dihlavi: Khamsa

1. Istanbul, Topkapi, H. 898 (1446): Chosroes and Shirin dethroned.
2. Dublin, Chester Beatty, Ms. 163 (1485): Chosroes in front of Shirin's palace; Chosroes and Shirin listening to music.

3. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. fol. 187 (1495): Chosroes in front of Shirin's castle, Chosroes and Shirin without reflection, Shirin getting a ring from Chosroes, wedding, love scene, Chosroes' assassination.
4. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. fol. 1615, fol. 55b (school in Shiraz 1590/1600): Chosroes and Shirin in a tent.
5. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, W. 624, fol. 80 (1595): Shirin and Chosroes.
6. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Quart. 1399: 2 paintings of Shirin 18th century.

Ali Schir Navai

1. Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 802 (1530/31), fol. 86b: Ferhad visiting Shirin in Bisotun.

Sahi: Chosroes and Shirin

1. London, British Museum, Or. 14010, fol. 122a (late 15th century): Shirin visiting Ferhad.
2. London, British Museum, Or. 2708, fol. 10a, 17a and 19a (around 1575): Shirin and Chosroes embracing each other; Shirin sees Chosroes' portrait, and Shirin taking a bath.
3. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Ms. oct. 3773, fol. 101a (1810/15): Shirin visiting Ferhad at the rock of Bisutun, Qagarisch).

Baki

1. London, British Museum, Or. 7084, fol. 67b (2nd half of the 16th century): Shirin taking a bath.

Qaswini

1. London, British Museum, fol. 80a: Ferhad in Bisutun; Shirin's sculpture in the rock.
2. Wien, Österr. Nationalbibliothek, N.F. 155, fol. 96a (1485): Castle Sabdiz in Bisotun with painting: Chosroes and Shirin sitting on a carpet.

Anthologies including Shirin - Paintings

1. London, British Museum Add. 27261, fol. 38 and 61: Persian Anthology (1410): Shirin looking at Chosroes' portrait; and Ferhad carrying Shirin.
2. Berlin, Islamic Museum, Anthology of Baysunqr (1420): Chosroes finding Shirin.
3. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 122 ,1432, fol. 45v: Shirin looking at Chosroes' portrait.
4. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, (1449): Shirin and Ferhad.
5. London, British Museum, Or. 6810 , 39 v, 62 and 72v (Herat 1494/5): Ferhad visiting Shirin; Ferhad in the palace: Ferhad's death.
6. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, suppl. Turc. 316, 317: Mir Ali Schir Navai: Diwan, fol. 268r: Shirin finding Ferhad's corpse.

Single sheets

1. Boston, Museum of Fine Art, (at the beginning of the 15th century): Chosroes and Shirin.
2. Berlin Kunstgewerbemuseum, (17th century): The beautiful Shirin (?).

Additional manuscripts

Nizami

1318 Teheran, U. Cent. Lib. 5179.

1362 Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Sup. Pers. 1817, No. 1247.

1363 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Or. Minutoli 35.

1365 Oxford Bodleian Library, Ouseley 274, 275, No. 585.

1366 Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Sup. Pers. 580, No. 1248.

1390 Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 1950: Anthology including Nizamis Khamsa.

1400 London, British Museum Add. 27.261.

1412 /13 Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 2044.

1431 St. Petersburg, Eremitage, Nr. 23.001 (to Schah Roch).

1434 London, British Library, Or. 12856 (miniatures).

1438 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ouseley 304, No. 586.

1439 Uppsala, UB (52 paintings).

1440 London, Royal Asiatic Society, Ms. 246.

1444 /45 Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS. Pers. 36.

1446 Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 781.

1457 /60 Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 753.

1461 Topkapi, Hazine 761.

Around 1460 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 137 (23 miniatures).

1462 Berlin, StB, Ms. or. Oct. 1259.

1463 /64 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 137.

- 1460 /70 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, P. 141.
- 1463 /64 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library Ms. 137.
- 1481 Petersburg, States Library, 338 (copied by Derwish Mohammed Taqi).
- 1475 /81 Istanbul, Topkapi Museum, Hazine 762, fol. 51b: Chosroes and Bahram Cobin in the battle.
- Around 1450-1475: Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 141.
- 1481 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library (25 miniatures).
- 1484 Strassburg, UB, Cod. 4715.
- 1485 Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Ms. or. Oct. 2076.
- 1488 London, India Office Library, No. 972.
- 1490 London, British Museum, Or. 2834 (26 paintings).
- 1491 Petersburg, Solitiov-Shedrin Public Library, No. 337.
- 1492 /96 Petersburg, Academy of Science; Institute of Oriental Studies. No. C. 57.
- 1494 London, British Museum, Or. 6810 (miniatures).
- 15th century (?) London, British Museum, Add. 25800.
- 1501 Istanbul, Topkapi, Hazine 1510 (paintings from 1570).
- 1501 Oxford, Bodleian Library , Elliot 192.
- 1504 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. 578, No. 1250.
- 1500 /1510 London, India Office Library, No. 976.
- 1509 Sarajewo, UB, Cod. 3698.
- 1520 /30 St. Petersburg, National Library, No. Dom 346.
- 1534 Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, Hazine 760, fol. 90b: Chosroes going hunting.

1537 New York, Pierpont Morgan L M. 471.

1560 /80 Rom, Bibl. dell` Accademia Naz. dei Lincei, Ms. Castani 58.

1585 London, British Library, Add. 17.329

1592 Berlin Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Oct. 1583.

Ca. 1590 London, British Library, Or. 7045 (miniatures).

1595 London, British Library, Or. 12208 (37 miniatures).

1620 Hamburg, Stadtbibliothek, Orient 225.

Around 1660 London, British Museum, Or. 12066.

1665 London, British Museum, Add. 6613.

Edinburgh, University Library 103.

Konya, Rumi-Museum, Library

Firdausi: Schahname

1217 Florenz, Bibl. Naz. Cent. Ms. Cl III.24 (G.F.3).

1325 -1335 Washington, Freer Gallery 29.24 (Gayumart).

1330 Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, H. 1479 Shiraz

1330 /36 Boston, Museum of Fine arts 30.105 (Demotte).

1330 /36 Cambridge, Mass. Fogg Art Mus. 1955.167
(Demotte)

1330 /36 Washington, Freer Gallery 38.3 (Demotte).

Early 14th century. Genf, Musee d' Art et Histoire, Ms. Add. Pers. 382.

1332 /33 St. Petersburg, Eremitage, 329.

1341 Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, W 677a
(Bahram Gur).

- 1341 Washington, Freer Gallery 42.12 (for Wesir Qawam ad-Din Hasan + 1353).
- 1370 Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, Hazine 2153, Täbris.
- 1371 Istanbul, Topkapi Sarayi, Hazine 1511, fol. 276a: Chosroes Parwis hearing the musician Barbad.
- 1393 /94 Kairo, Egypt. Library (67 paintings).
- 1430 Teheran, Gulistan Pal. Lib. Ms. 61 für Baysangur (Herat).
- 1415 /35 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ouseley Add. 176.
- 1438 London, British Museum, Or. 1403.
- 1439 /40 Patna, Khuda Baksh Oriental Library Ms. 3787.
- Around 1440 London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Coll. S.A. Hakim.
- 1443 Teheran, Gulistan Museum.
- 1444 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, suppl. Pers. 494.
- 1445 London, Royal Asiatic Society, Pers. Ms. 239.
- 1445 St. Petersburg, Asian Museum of the Academy of Science (29 Paintings).
- 1446 Dunmalre Castle, Scotland (89 Paintings).
- 1448 Oxford, Bodleian Library.
- 1460 Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS. Pers. 9.
- Around 1475 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M. 85189.
- 1480 Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Pers. 157.
- 1485 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale suppl. Pers. 1280.
- 1486 London, British Museum, Add. 18188.
- 1490 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. Pers. 228.

- 1490 Istanbul, UB, Yildiz 7955/311.
- 1494 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Elliot 325 (55 Paintings).
- 1475 500 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M. 57.17.7,3,10, 4.
- 1525 /35 Genf, Collection of Sadruddin Aga Khan.
- Around 1530 Berlin, Museum of Islamic art, No. I. 5/82
- 1545 /46 Istanbul, Topkapi Serayi, H. 1520, fol. 271a: The dethroned Chosroes.
- 1546 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. Pers. 489.
- 1591 Philadelphia, Freer Library, Ms. 53.
- 1590 /95 London, British Museum, Add. 27257.
- 1590 - around 1615? Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mb78.9.5.
- 1608 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M 71.49.3.
- 1610 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M. 81.12a,b.
- 1809 Strassburg, UB, Cod. 4692.
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.90.160.1 and M. 75.52 (2 folios).

Amir Chosroes Dihlavi: Hamsa

- 1400-1450 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M (1 folio).
- 1450 Washington, Freer and Sackler.
- 1463 Dublin Chester Beatty Library.
- 1485 Dublin Chester Beatty Library P 163 (13 miniatures, Chosroes arriving in front of Shirin's palace).
- 149 Istanbul, Topkapi Serayi, Hazine 1008.
- 1496 Istanbul, Topkapi Serayi, Hazine 676.

- 1497 London, British Library, Or. 11327. (miniatures).
- 1498 Istanbul, Topkapi Serayi, Hazine 799.
- 1503 Rom, Bibl. dell' Accademia Naz. dei Lincei, Ms. Caetani 38/39.
- 1564 /65 Istanbul, Museum of. Turkish and Islamic Art, Tiem 2060.
- 1597 /98 Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery W. 624.
- 17th century. London, British Library, Or. 17th century. (miniatures).

Mir Ali Shir Navai known as Fani

- Petersburg, Public Library., Dorn 559.
- 1485 Oxford Bodleian Library, Elliot 287 (11 miniatures)
- 1492 Windsor Castle, Royal Library, MS A 8.
- 1530 Istanbul, Topkapi Serayi, Hazine 804.
- Fahreddin Yakub b. Mehmed known as Fahri: Husrev u Sirin
- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek Hs. Or. Quart. 1069.

Seyhi Yusuf Sinan: Husrev and Sirin

- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Oct. 960 (1492).
- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Oct. 1972 (1504).
- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Or. Oct. 2111 (1500).
- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek, Hs. Or. Oct. 918 (1555).
- Marburg, Staatsbibliothek, Tübinger Depot, Ms. Or. Quart.1915.
- Gotha, Staatsbibliothek, pt. 220, 126,154 and 116 (1703/4).

Vashi: Farhad and Shirin

London, British Museum, Or. 6949 (at the end of the 17th century).

Hatifi: Khusrau and Shirin

London, British Museum, Or. 9858 (16th and 17th century)

Jafar: Khusrau and Shirin

London, British Museum, Or. 12865 (16th century)

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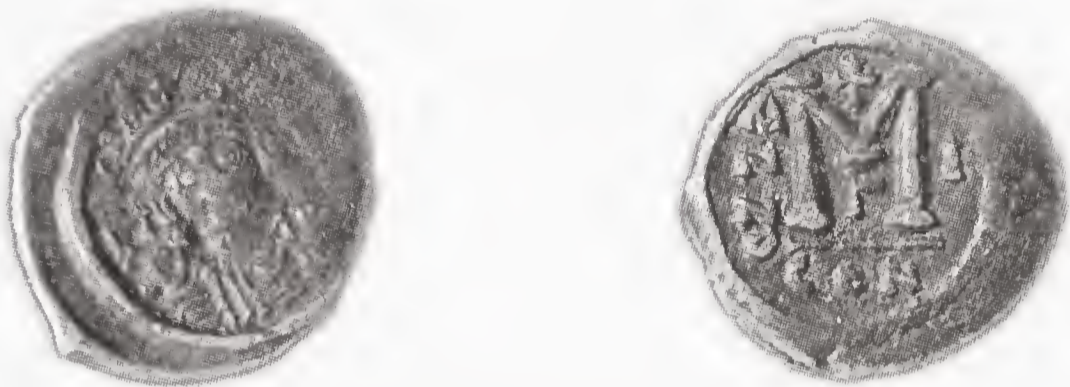
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Byzantine Coins



(Solidus) Maurice (582-602), Constantinople



(Follis) Maurice (582-602)

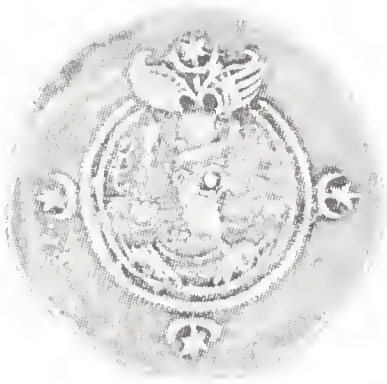


*(Solidus) Heraclius (610-641) and Constantine,
Constantinople (diameter 19 mm)*



(Tremissis) Heraclius (610-641)

Persian Coins



Drachma Chosroes II from 592 (original diameter 27 mm)



Drachma Chosroes II from 616



Drachma Chosroes II from 620



Drachma Chosroes II from 624



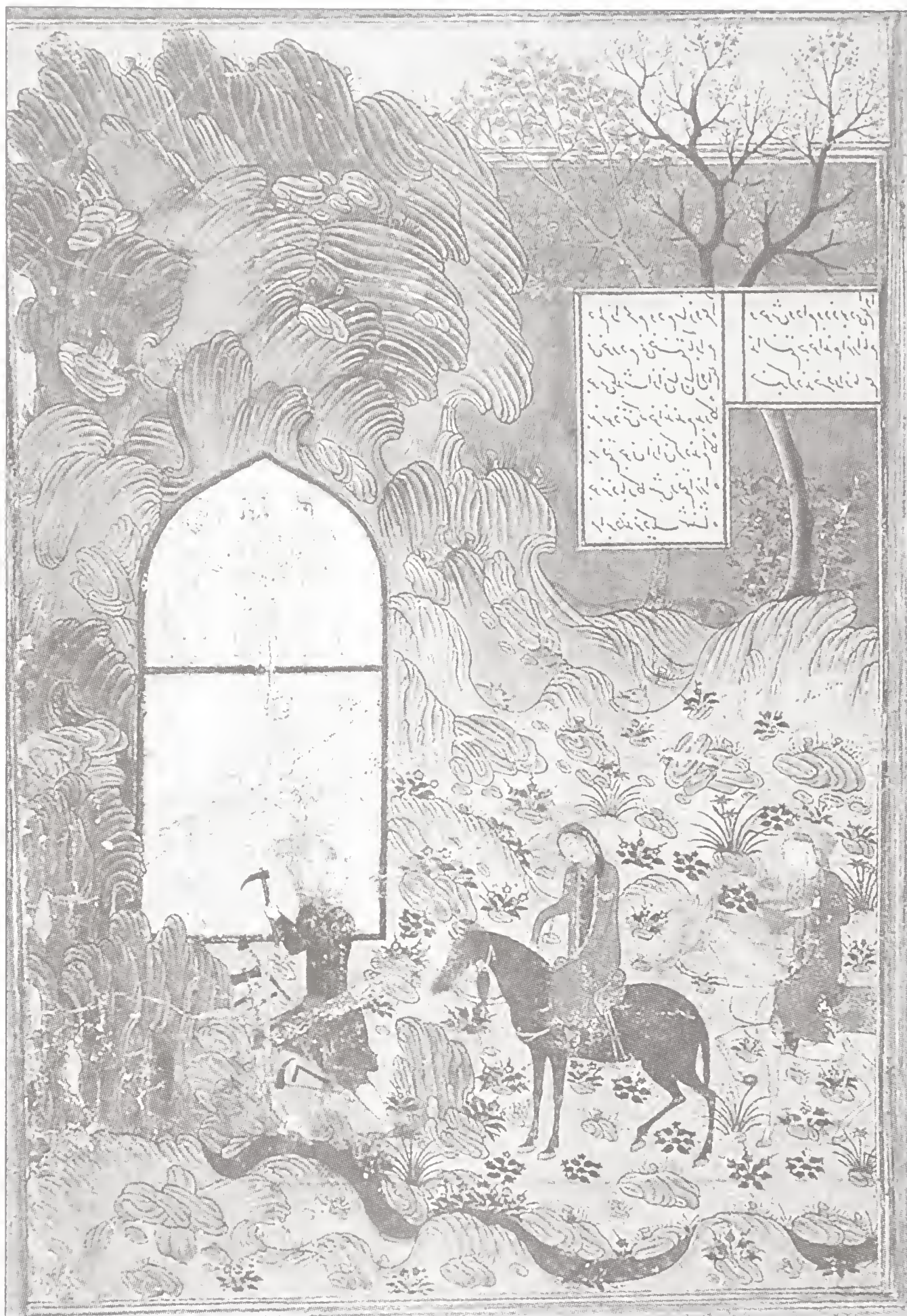
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Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Sprenger 1475, fol. 129a (15th cen.):
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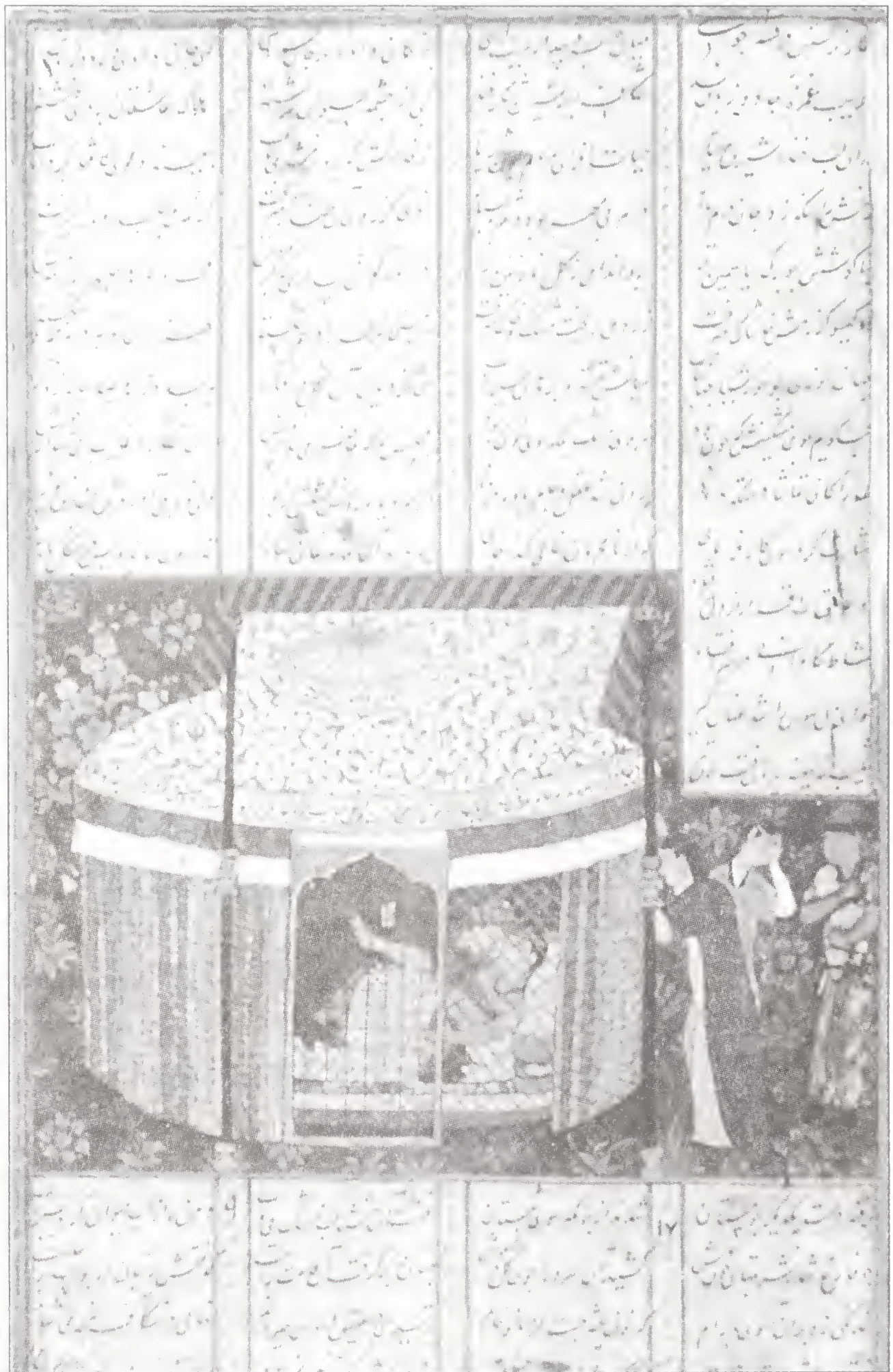
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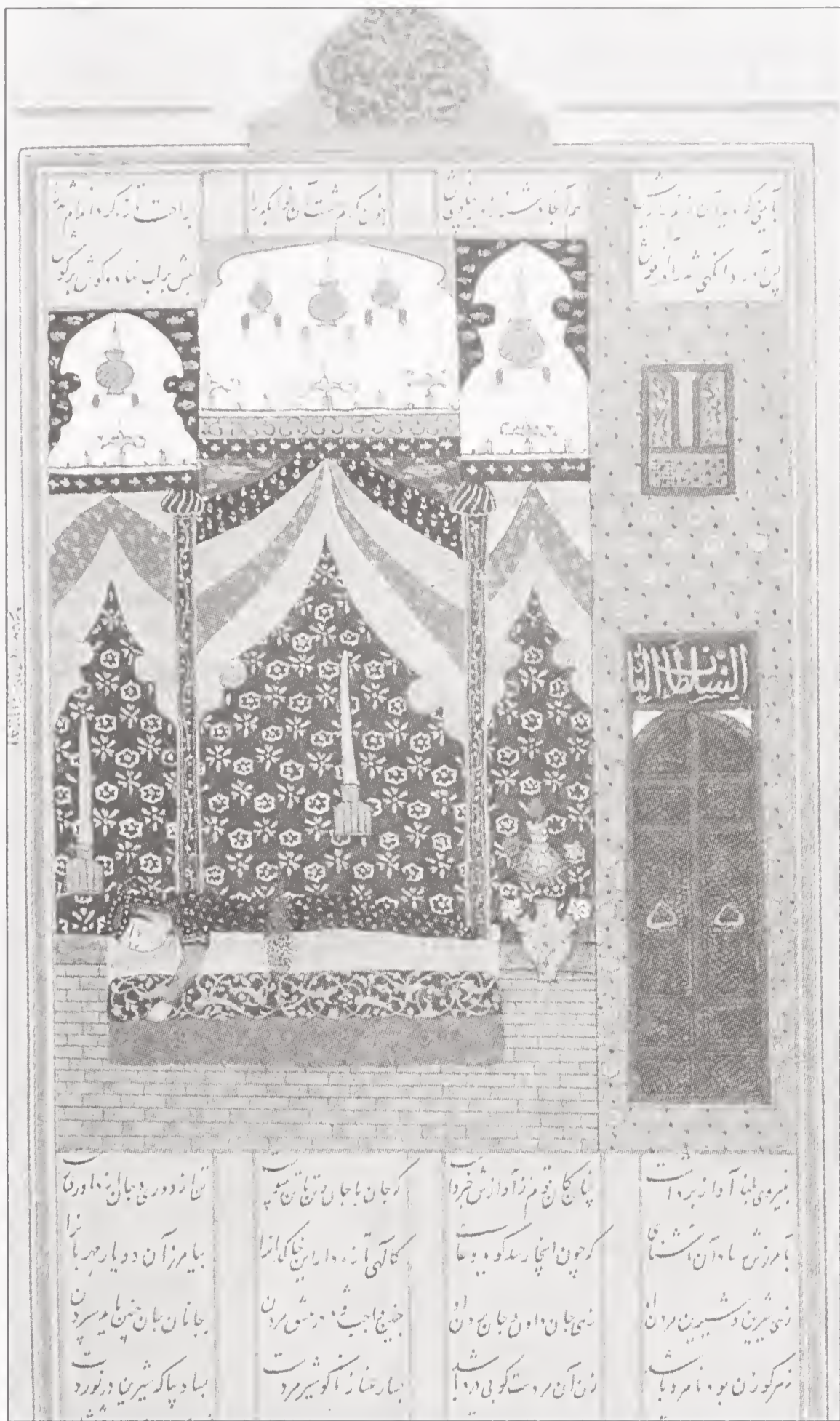
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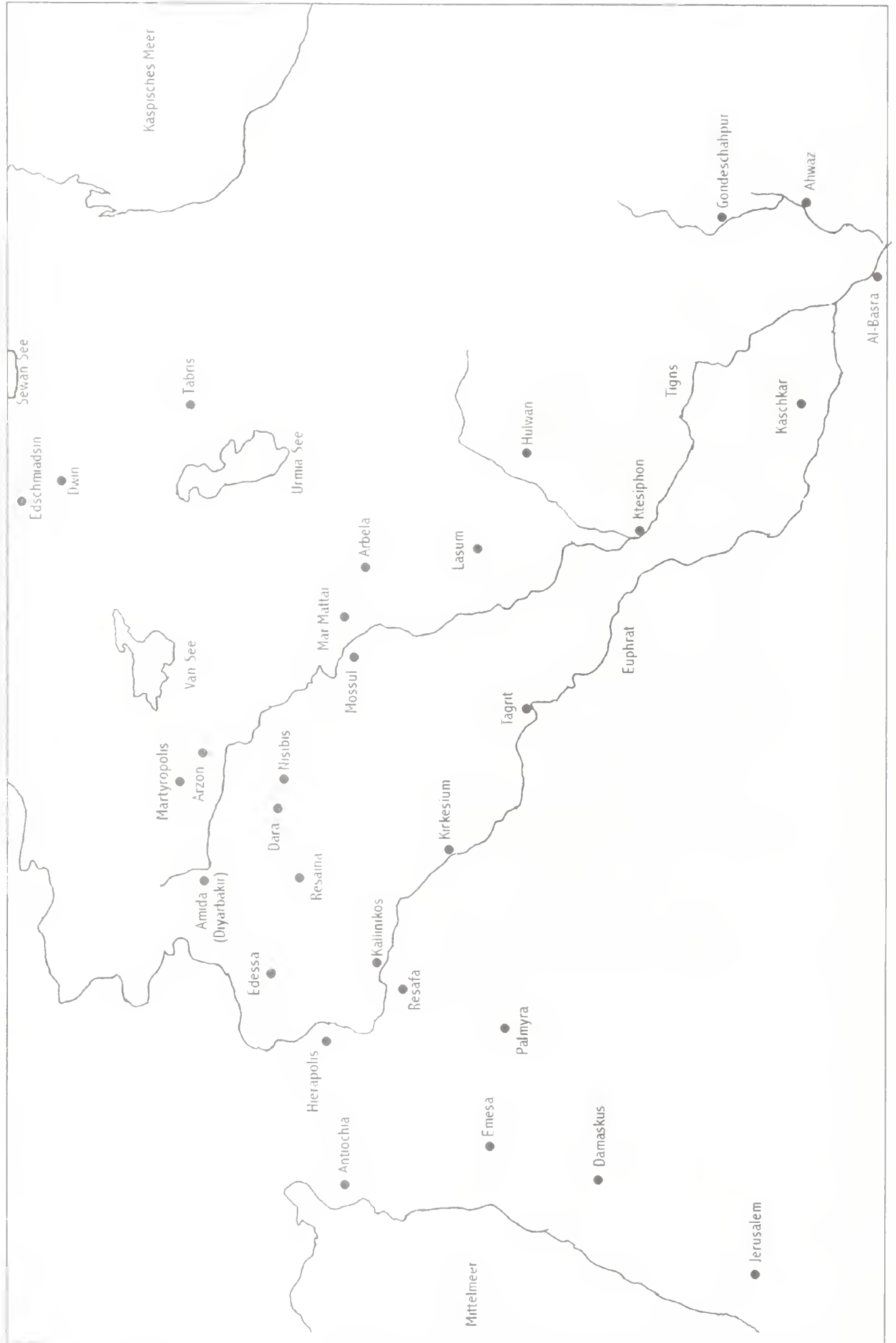
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Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Ms. 1991, fol. 103b (1487):
 Shirin embraces Chosroes coffin (from: Love and Art, Istanbul 2003, 77)



Map

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